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THE OLD AND THE YOUNG



THE OLD AND THE YOUNG

—[I VECCHI E I GIOVANI]—

BY

LUIGI PIRANDELLO

AUTHOR OF "THE OUTCAST," "SHOOT!" "SIX CHARACTERS
IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR," ETC.

Authorized Translation from the Italian by
C. K. SCOTT-MONCRIEFF

VOLUME

II

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E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

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PART II

CHAPTER I

Midnight, Your Excellency . . .

SEATED at the large writing table, on which lay open, scattered all round him, reports and prospectuses bristling with figures, the secretary was waiting for H.E. the Minister to remember that he had not finished dictating.

This was the third night in succession that Cav. Cao—not that he minded work, oh dear no! still, after all, a whole day spent drudging away at the Ministry; then in the evening, here, in His Excellency's palazzo; and one, two, three—why, at this rate, they would never get to the end of this financial statement, which, for all that, would have to be read to the Chamber of Deputies in a few days' time.

He could stand it no longer! It was not so much his physical exhaustion, however, that made this work an intolerable burden, as the distress that he had felt for some time past at the sight of that revered chief, for whom he still felt a deep and sincere affection, if not the admiration of earlier days.

Ah, that admiration! . . . Cav. Cao had seen so many things in his time, at first from a distance;

others he now beheld at closer range! Still, to give the devil his due, a man does not, cannot live for seventy years and more, and perform none but heroic actions. He must, inevitably, do some foolish things, big or little. And with one one day, another the next, they draw out in time. . . .

So thinking, Cav. Cao drew out a stray hair from his moustache, of unnatural length. Per-bacco! It reached to the top of his head. . . . A single hair. Black.

To distract his attention from the weariness, the boredom of waiting, he set his fancy to work. A pair of His Excellency's spectacles, lying there on the table, were transformed into twin lakes; a brush for wiping pens, into a dense grove of ever-green oaks; the surface of the table, where it was cleared of litter, a boundless plain, over which primitive, nomadic tribes might be imagined as roaming.

His Excellency was pacing the floor of the study, with bent head and bowed shoulders, his hands clasped behind his back. And Cav. Cao, raising his eyes to look at him, with the image of that penwiper still imprinted on his retina, was reminded that His Excellency had hair on his back. A hairy back and a hairy chest. He had seen him one day in his bath. He had looked just like a bear.

Ah, how many things, how many absurd peculiarities had he not discovered in the person of

His Excellency, now that his early admiration of him had died! The nape of his neck, for instance, so thick and smooth and glossy, and all those little black spots that stippled his nose, and those eyebrows, running *so*, and *so*, like a pair of commas. Even in his eyes, those eyes that at one time had so overawed him, he had discovered certain curious little flecks, that seemed to puncture their green pupils.

How true it was: *minuit praesentia famam!* And Cav. Cao was astounded and at the same time saddened by the discovery that he could now see in this light the man who in other days had positively dazzled him, in the heat of his enthusiasm for the heroic deeds that were recounted of him, as a Garibaldino, and for the memorable political contests in which he had afterwards so strenuously fought.

Mah! Nowadays Francesco D'Atri thought only of timidly staining, with a canary yellow dye, the few hairs that still clung to his scalp and his sweeping beard which would have looked so well, if left white.

He himself also, it must be admitted, Cav. Cao, for the last year or so, had begun, just a little . . . only his moustaches. But simply so as not to have them partly white and partly black. That annoyed him. And besides, for him the dye he used would never produce the terrible consequences it had produced in the case of His Excellency. More-

over, although he was not yet fort . . . ah, yes, he had turned forty, three days ago: very well, forty, then: he would never marry. Whereas Francesco D'Atri had married, *at sixty-seven*; and a young wife, to boot.

An unmistakable sign of softening of the brain.

So that finished him off, eh? Time to put him on the shelf (life has its hard and fast rules!) —on the shelf, without consideration or pity. Pity, at the most, he, personally, might feel for him, because he was fond of him, because he could see that he was suffering agony, in silence, for the enormous mistake he had made; but he felt contempt as well, aye, the bitterest contempt for the submissive attitude he saw him adopt towards that wife who, almost from the day of their wedding, had set to work to make a public holocaust of his honour.

All, or almost all of them had married late and ill, those fine heroes of the Revolution. Oh, in their young days, one knew, they had something very different to think of! They might fall in love, yes . . . *la bella Gigogin* . . . a kiss, and:

Farewell, dear heart, farewell,
The Army's on the march. . . .

After all, when you came to think of it, there was nothing that they had managed to do at the right time and well, neither their studies nor anything else. . . . In conspiracy, on the battlefield

they had been in their element; in peace time, now, they were a little like fish out of water. In the public eye, and without any definite position; elderly, and without a family growing up round them. . . . They were bound, alas, to do late and ill all the silly things they had not had time to do in their youth, when their years would have been some excuse for them. And then, too . . .

Cav. Cao, at this stage, shook himself as though a shudder had run along his spine. For some days past he had been positively appalled by the gravity and tragedy of the situation.

Every night and every morning, the newsvendors were shouting through the streets of Rome the name of one or another Deputy in the National Parliament, coupled with the raucous announcement now of a fraud, now of a secret commission from one or another of the Banks.

In certain crucial moments, every conscientious man, who scorns to run with the herd, does what? He collects his thoughts; ponders the issue; takes one side or the other according to his own convictions, and sticks to it.

Well, this was what Cav. Cao had done. He had taken the side of the slandered party, and was sticking to it.

He could not, all the same, deny in his own mind that he was really enjoying the enormous scandal. He was enjoying it above all because—carried away by the part he had to play—he found

himself endowed in these days with a mastery of words, a verbal fecundity which so to speak inebriated him, a stock of phrases, winged and scornful phrases, which seemed to him marvellous in their efficacy and filled him with stupefaction and wonder.

Why yes, indeed: the skies of Italy, in these days, were raining down mud, and people were rolling it into balls and throwing them; and the mud was sticking everywhere, on the pale, distorted faces of assailed and assailants, on the medals won in the past on fields of battle (these, at least, ought surely to have been held sacred!) and on crosses and orders and gold-laced coats and on the door-plates of Government and newspaper offices.

It rained torrents of mud; and it seemed as though all the sewers of the city had overflowed, and the new national existence of the third Rome must be swamped in that turbid, fetid flood of mire, over which hovered screaming—black birds of prey—calumny and suspicion.

Beneath the ashen sky, in the thick, smoky atmosphere, while, like gibbous moons in the raw twilight, the electric street-lamps spluttered into flame, and, jostling one another with their umbrellas, amid the incessant drizzle of a slow falling rain, the crowd pressed close about him, Cav. Cao saw in these days every street corner become a pillory; an executioner, every mud-spattered

news vendor, who brandished like an axe his grimy sheet, spawned in the dens of blackmail, and spewed forth obscenely the vilest accusations. And no policeman thought of stopping their mouths! But, of course, the facts themselves were shouting more obscenely still.

A man of disciplined mind, Cav. Cao would fain have defended the Government at all costs against the charge of a shameful complicity of Ministers with the Banks and the Stock Exchange, through the Press and Parliament. He declined to believe that the Banks had subsidized the Government for electoral ends, and for other, baser, secret ends; and that, rewarding favour with favour, the Government had introduced measures which were privileges for the Banks, and had defended the miscreants, nominating them to Orders of Knighthood and to the Senate. But he could not deny that credit had been given to certain favoured politicians, who in Parliament and through the Press had fought to the profit of the fraudulent Banks, betraying the good faith of the country; and that these fortunate persons had tried to conceal facts that were already known or might be guessed; and that, now that charges were flying, they were prepared to strike, but with the hope that the destruction of the weaker vessels might enable the stronger to escape scot free. Certainly, the anger of the country at seeing so bespattered with mud various public characters who in the

brave days of the heroic Liberation had given the strength of their arms to the country was now fiercely turning upon the glory of the Revolution itself, was discovering mudstains even there; and Cav. Cao felt his heart bleed. This was the bankruptcy of patriotism, perdio!

And he raged against certain showers of abuse which were being concentrated, at this time, from the whole of Italy upon Rome, represented as a putrid carcass.

In a Neapolitan paper he had read that all strength was enfeebled by contact with the monstrous Corpse; all enthusiasm cooled; and every virtue corrupted. Better, better far the days when it lived upon indulgences and jubilees, letting rooms to pilgrims, selling blessed rosaries and images to the devout!

Cav. Cao trembled, because the Clericals, naturally, were exultant.

Accompanying His Excellency, now and again, to Montecitorio, he saw in the corridors and rooms all the Deputies, young and old, novices and veterans, friends or opponents of the Government, enveloped in a cloud of distrust and suspicion. It seemed to him that they all felt themselves spied upon, watched; that some of them laughed, in ostentation, while others, dismayed by the colour of their cheeks, pretended to be burying their heads in some absorbing book. For some of them, notwithstanding the cold weather outside, the fur-

naces were not properly regulated: too hot! too hot! too hot! Who could tell in how many consciences lurked the terror lest, at any moment, the eye of an examining magistrate might penetrate, to search and probe them, armed with the cruellest of glasses.

It had struck Cav. Cao, that afternoon, that certain Deputies, engaged in animated discussion in one of the rooms, had suddenly broken off their conversation when they saw His Excellency D'Atri pass. He had stopped for a moment to stare at them, frowning, and had heard one of these Deputies, who had at once turned his back on him, clearly repeat, several times, in an undertone but with a ringing accent and all the force of scorn, the name of Corrado Selmi, which at that time was on every tongue.

Cav. Cao knew very well that no one would have dared to cast any doubt on the integrity of Francesco D'Atri; but it might easily happen that, through his wife, he too was involved in Selmi's downfall, which everyone now regarded as inevitable.

However, there he was: pacing the floor of his study and evidently quite oblivious alike of the man he was keeping waiting, and of his financial statement. His Excellency seemed to be concerned only by the fretful wail of an infant which, in the silence of the house, penetrated to the study from a distant room, notwithstanding the closed doors

in between. He had left the room once already to see what was wrong with his daughter.

Cav. Cao could not control his irritation any longer (because, good God, the whole of Rome knew that the child . . . the child . . .), rose, as though forced up by a spring, breathing heavily through his nostrils.

His Excellency stopped short and turned to gaze at him.

Immediately Cav. Cao screwed up his face, as though in a sudden, acute spasm of pain, and said, smiling and rubbing his leg:

“Cramp, Your Excellency . . .”

“Why, yes . . . you have been waiting. . . . Please forgive me, Cavaliere. I was thinking of something else. . . . That will do for to-night, eh? You must be tired; and I don’t feel in the mood for work. It must be eleven o’clock, surely?”

“Midnight, Your Excellency! The exact time is ten minutes past twelve. . . .”

“Indeed? And . . . and that theatre, when does it finish?”

“What theatre, Your Excellency?”

“Oh, I don’t know; the Costanzi, I think. I mean for . . . for that child’s sake. . . . You hear how she’s crying. Nothing will quiet her. Perhaps, if her mother were here. . . .”

“Would you like me to go round to the Costanzi, and tell her?”

“No, no, thank you. . . . She can’t be much

longer, now. Wait a minute, though: there is something I must tell Auriti."

"Cavaliere Giulio?"

"Yes. He is with my wife. He may not be coming in, after the theatre. You would oblige me greatly by telling him."

"To come up here? I shall go at once, Your Excellency."

"Thank you. Good night, Cavaliere. I shall see you to-morrow."

Cav. Cao made a deep bow, inhaling a long, long breath of air through his nostrils; as soon as he had shut the door behind him, he expelled it with a snort of rage, which changed at once however into a gracious smile at the sight of the footman in livery who came towards him.

In the whirlpool.

As soon as he was alone, Francesco D'Atri clapped both his hands to his face. His polished scalp reflected the blaze of the electric lights that hung from the ceiling. He remained for a while in the study, pacing the floor, his face lined with exhaustion, distorted by the grim thoughts in which he was wrapped, stroking with his small hand, wrinkled and hardened by the passage of years, that long, canary-yellow beard which contrasted so painfully and preposterously with the whole of his expression and his natural dignity.

How in the world could he fail to see that such a beard, in the present circumstances, was a horrible disfigurement?

He failed to see it, because for some time past Francesco D'Atri had ceased to control his own actions, nor was he any longer his own sole master. The eyes through which he beheld himself were no longer his own; they were the eyes of a different Francesco D'Atri, who faced him every morning in the mirror with a sullen air of angry humiliation at seeing his eyelids swollen and discoloured, and all those wrinkles and white patches on his face. Nor was this the only Francesco D'Atri that came to life in him in the senile disintegration of his consciousness, and led him to think, feel and move as he himself could not, could not any longer, with those limbs and brain and heart enfeebled by age.

He was now a poor old man, who would gladly have crept into a corner never to leave it again; but all those other pitiless selves, that survived within him, taking advantage of his bewildered state, refused to leave him in peace; they fought for him, played with him, forbade him to complain and to say that he was tired, to admit that he no longer remembered anything; and compelled him to lie when there was no need to lie, to smile when he had no wish to smile, to dress himself up, to do all sorts of things that seemed to him superfluous. And one of them it was that had dyed his

beard in that ridiculous fashion; another had made him take a wife, when he was well aware that it was far too late; yet another made him hold on at all costs to his high office, which he knew to be far beyond his powers; another persuaded him to feel a tender affection for that baby, whom even he knew to be not his own, adducing the most specious of reasons, to wit that, he himself having begotten a daughter in his youth, to whom another man had given name and love and care and maintenance, it behoved him now to give to this child his name and love and care and maintenance, as though she were really his own poor little baby of long ago.

Yielding, however, to this sentiment, owning the child before all the world as his, "Ah!" he was warned by the self of the beard, armed with brush and lotion, "if, my dear fellow, you wish to be taken for a father, with that young wife by your side, you must give a touch of yellow to all those white hairs!" He would fain have turned a deaf ear to this foolish counsel, which seemed to him a profanation not only of his venerable appearance, but also, when it came to that, of his true feelings for the child; he was incapable, however, of offering more than a timid resistance. And this painful and absurd timidity was precisely reflected in the dyeing of his beard.

Caught, held fast as though in a crowd of people every one of whom appeared to be acting for him-

self without thought of him, he did not know which way to turn; nothing gave him any pleasure; but, if he were to turn one way or the other, he was afraid of arousing the displeasure of one or other of his cruel masters; and any decision, however trivial, meant a fatiguing effort.

He saw only too plainly the trap in which he had fallen, by no wish of his own; and he could think of no way out of it.

Everything was in confusion! Here in Rome, the indecent clamour of a vast criminal fraud; in Sicily, a ferment of revolt. Amid the uproar of the most abject passions, let loose in the decay of the national conscience, people had barely noticed the rumble of distant musketry, the first thunderclap of a terrible storm which was gathering with alarming rapidity. One voice alone had been raised in Parliament to set before the Government the bloodstained spectre of certain peasants massacred in Sicily, at Caltavuturo; to brandish before the world the angry threat of the peril in store, were the pernicious belief to take root in the country that the poor and weak might be struck down with impunity, while the swindlers found sanctuary at Montecitorio.

Yes, that Sicilian Deputy had given a true account of the facts: those Sicilian peasants, finding in their rage at the injustice of others the courage to assert their own rights with violence, had gone forth to till the Crown lands usurped by

the petty tyrants of their village, dishonest trustees of the property of the Commune: alarmed by the arrival of the troops, they had stopped their work and hurried to the municipal offices to demand the portioning of those lands among them; in the absence of his chief, a subordinate official had appeared on the balcony, and, to disperse the crowd, had advised them to go back in the mean time to their work; but on their way the crowd had found the road blocked by reinforcements of militia; showing signs of resistance, they had found themselves first of all attacked with bayonets; then with rifle fire, for having brandished their tools in the air to frighten their assailants. Twelve were dead; the wounded numbered more than fifty: among these, several children, one of whom had been pierced by at least seven bayonet thrusts.

This ghastly detail had made so vivid an impression upon Francesco D'Atri that for the last three days, in spite of all his own troubles and distracting thoughts, his mind kept on turning to it with horror. Because the ferocity of that soldier, venting itself on the body of an innocent child, seemed to him the most precise illustration of the times: he could see the same ferocity in everyone, and the sight appalled him. No longer any respect, any reverence for the most sacred things; a blind fury, an insane hatred, a frenzy of dissolution, a savage delight in base revenge. He

was expecting to be seized at any moment by some madman or other, and made to give an account of all his misdeeds, past and present. Misdeeds? Was there a man alive who had never done amiss? But this was a moment in which even the most trivial, those which at any other time it was customary to overlook, leaped to the public eye, borrowed from the sinister glare in the sky a certain bold relief, a certain mysterious colour, which at once aroused a furious desire for investigation, for the vile satisfaction or fierce consolation of discovering such other more serious corruptions as they might conceal. The most balanced judgment, that of the Public Prosecutor, held in check by everyone and persuaded with such a wealth of argument not to break the bonds of patience, now that everyone was of one mind had broken loose, had cast off all restraint, all social considerations; had become overbearing in its arrogance; and no man's conscience could any longer feel at rest or safe.

That marriage of his to a young girl; the illusion that his past reputation and the paramount distinctions he had won would make up, in her esteem and in her heart, for all the youthful ardour that must of necessity be lacking from his kind and deep affection; the thoughtless profusion of their life; the scandal of his wife's intimacy with Selmi; and now the child . . . might at any moment become a matter for public derision, a

pretext for accusations and spiteful insinuations, the source of any number of damaging suspicions.

Amid the phantasms of his uncertainty, in that empty, dim reality in which he seemed to be enveloped, Francesco D'Atri felt his secret terror grow from hour to hour, now that a shout of rage was going up at the forcible rescue, on the Government's part, of a number of politicians more conspicuous and more deeply compromised than the rest. Among them was Selmi, who, for all that, had shown a complete indifference to the scandal throughout. His colleagues in the Cabinet had said nothing to him about it; but he had gathered from the expression on their faces that he was being given to understand that Selmi was escaping by his influence. It was not true! Not by his influence, certainly; but because he was one of them; and, at that moment, his downfall might bring them all crashing down after him. Was not such a remedy worse than the disease? He had been powerless to resist; how could he utter that name? Free from any reproach, immaculate, because of a single weakness, of that illusion he had so quickly lost, he saw himself dragged down by his wife into the mud of the streets, where a mob athirst for scandal were shouting his name to make a sacrifice of him, heaping up in a blood-stained mass his body and his wife's and Selmi's. Now, with equal vividness, he saw himself carried along the streets, but with Selmi clinging

fast to his wife and himself, and with the whole mob clinging fast to Selmi. He pictured them bringing Selmi back to his house, with all the crowd roaring behind, mocking and insulting him. Everyone, yes, everyone would suppose that it was he who was saving Selmi, and not from generosity but from fear! Perhaps Selmi himself, as well. . . . But, after all, what had he to fear? From generosity, if anything, he might have done it, because he could remember the time when the other was valiant and noble, setting life at naught in the face of danger, and aflame with the sacred ideal of the country. But no, not even in that generous impulse would he have done it: he felt too keenly, quite apart from his hatred and contempt for the betrayal (albeit he laid the blame for that more on his wife), he felt too keenly the suspicion that he was afraid.

There still remained, however, after all the papers that might have ruined Selmi had been hidden away, exposed, defenceless and compromised, an innocent party: Roberto Auriti. A debt of about forty thousand lire had been found standing in his name; and, what was worse, more than one laconic and mysterious note, in which allusion was made to a *friend*, who guaranteed the Governor of the Bank or promised that he would act or speak or write according to the instructions he had received. These notes were by this time in the hands of the judicial authorities, and this

was what he would shortly have to tell Giulio Auriti, Roberto's brother.

He had grown used by now to the horror of the situation; he had come to look upon it almost as an inevitable destiny; and his feeling at the moment was one of growing revulsion, heavy with weariness and pain. No comfort to be found in his memories of the past: were he to recall them for a moment, they would serve only to increase the shame and misery of the present. And in this feeling of revulsion, the sight of everything, even of the ornaments in the room, became intolerably burdensome to him. Ah, darkness, darkness, a resting place: death, yes! All this warfare made it easy to overcome one's horror of death. What cruelty! Here was a man who must soon die. . . . Why keep these dregs for the last days, to be drained from the stirrup-cup of life . . .

Francesco D'Atri stopped short, with staring, lifeless eyes. He imagined the time after his own death: time as it would be for other people. . . . Calm would be restored . . . for other people! The waves smoothed, the horror of the tempest quelled; and no pity, no regret, no memory of the man who had been where the storm broke and had perished under it.

All of a sudden, on the bracket upon which his gaze was fixed, he became aware of a little porcelain monkey which was grinning stupidly at him. He was tempted for a moment to break it; he

turned his back on it; once again he caught the sound of the child's wailing cry and made off to the distant room from which it came.

The glove on the carpet.

It was the nurse's room. A night light, screened by a talc shade, on the chest of drawers, shed a feeble glimmer. The old housekeeper, a lean, trim figure, was pacing up and down with the child in her arms, who, in the throes of its convulsions, seemed to be trying to slip from her hands; she managed to clasp it more tightly to her bosom, and kept on crooning to it, "Noona, noona . . ." as though in response to its agonized wails, keeping time with a rhythmical motion of her body, and bring her hand down gently upon its back.

The wet-nurse, with an enormous breast exposed, was crying also: she was crying in silence and swearing to the lady's maid, who was sitting beside her, that she had partaken of no obnoxious food.

Francesco D'Atri stopped for a moment to gaze at her with unseeing eyes: and his features expressed the effort which he almost instinctively, with his thoughts elsewhere, was making to understand what she was trying to say through her floods of tears. At the same time he gazed with disgust at that indecent breast, from the purple nipple of which a drop of milk was hanging.

The maid discreetly drew the nurse's bodice together, so as to hide her breast. Whereupon Francesco D'Atri turned his gaze to the housekeeper; deafened by the wretched infant's screams, he blinked his eyes; then went across to the bed table and picked up a little bell, which he began to tinkle gently before the child's eyes, to distract its attention, following behind the housekeeper, who continued to pace up and down with her swaying motion.

So he was discovered, a little later, by Donna Giannetta on her return from the theatre, splendid, in a rustle of silken garments. She raised her eyebrows and parted her lips in a faint mocking smile at this nocturnal, touching, family picture, supposing that His Excellency was amusing himself, before the servants, by making a display of his ridiculous paternal affection after shouldering the burdens of the State. But the maid, hastening to take the black scarf, glittering with little discs of silver, which her mistress threw off from her head, and to unfasten her cloak, explained to her in a whisper what had happened.

"Really? Poor little thing . . ." she said, with a show of indifference, but in a warm, melodious voice, and went across, fragrant with scent and powder, with her expanse of bosom, a magnificent figure, to the housekeeper. But D'Atri made a sign to her not to speak. The baby had at last been soothed.

Donna Giannetta then with a little yawn of weariness went off to her own room. At the door she turned and said, in a sing-song tone, to her husband:

“By the way, Giulio Auriti is in there.”

Francesco D’Atri bowed his head; went towards her and said in a low and solemn voice, without looking at her:

“Wait for me. I have something to say to you.”

“A long speech?” she inquired. “Oh Lord, can’t it keep till to-morrow? I’m so tired, I’m afraid I should fall asleep. I’ve had such a boring evening.”

“You will oblige me by waiting,” he insisted.

And he returned to the study, where Auriti was expecting him.

Oh, how gladly now would he have avoided the sight of that young man, for whom he had terrible news! He had forgotten all about him. . . . He moved, in these days, gave orders, instructions, forced himself into actions, words, decisions, for which a moment later he could no longer see any reason, occasion, object. He shut his eyes and heaved a deep sigh, his brow darkened by a black oppression. He had just told his wife to wait for him, as he wished to speak to her. But about what? With what object? And he himself, not an hour ago, had asked his secretary to tell Auriti, as he left the theatre, to come round to the house,

as he needed urgently to see him. But it was necessary, of course, that the poor young man should be informed immediately of the terrible disaster that threatened him. And nobody but himself could inform him of it.

As he drew back the curtain from the door and caught sight of the other inside, he felt a certain rancour at the pity and emotion that he was arousing in him already.

Giulio Auriti was not in the least like his brother: tall, slender, dressed in the height of fashion, he revealed by the tempered agility of his movements a vigorous energy, softened by a certain air of unconscious pride in his fine steely eyes. The hair of his head was prematurely grizzled, in contrast to the tawny hue of his thick, curling beard.

His face changed all of a sudden at the sight of the old Minister coming towards him with so disconcerted an air.

One of his gloves, which he was holding in his hand, dropped on the carpet.

“Well?” he inquired.

Francesco D’Atri lowered his eyelids to shut out the painful spectacle of the desperate anxiety which he could read on the other’s face. He spread out his hands and murmured, shaking his head:

“They haven’t found . . .”

“Oh no!” Auriti broke out, with a second in-

stantaneous change of countenance, expressive of scorn, anger, and at the same time a firm resolve to rebel against an act of injustice without any further regard for anyone. "No, excuse me, Your Excellency, no: the document exists, and it must be found! You know that my brother Roberto . . ."

"I know, I know . . ." D'Atri attempted, coldly, to cut him short.

"Well, then!" Auriti pressed the matter. "That statement is the only thing that can save him, and it must not be allowed to vanish! Or else, everything else must vanish with it that can compromise Roberto!"

D'Atri sat down, clapped his hands again to his face and let fall from his hidden lips:

"The trouble is this: the judicial authorities . . ."

"No, Your Excellency!" Auriti again protested. "The judicial authorities are in possession of only such material as the Government have chosen to let them have. Everybody knows that!"

D'Atri gazed at the speaker as though he himself, at least, did not know it; drew himself up in his chair and, setting his features, seemed to be warning him that he could not allow so scandalous a rumour to be repeated in his hearing.

But Auriti continued to rave, wringing his hands as he spoke:

"And I . . . I who was perfectly calm. . . .

Why, Your Excellency! I was perfectly calm . . . it was you!"

D'Atri's head sank; but immediately, as though some force within him had given an impetus to his spirit, he drew himself up again and shouted angrily, with a glare of hatred at the young man:

"Where do I come in? What can I do?"

"Why!" Auriti repeated. "Selmi . . ."

"Selmi . . ." Francesco D'Atri roared, clenching his fists, as though he would have liked to hold the man in his clutch.

"Why, yes, let them save him, if they choose!" exclaimed Giulio Auriti. "In order to save him, though . . ."

"Of course! You imagine too that it is I who am saving him . . ." said D'Atri solemnly, shaking his head with the bitterest scorn.

"But Selmi himself, Your Excellency," Auriti promptly took him up, with a different kind of scorn, "you will find that Selmi himself will not allow them to save him at the price of the moral assassination of my brother. Besides, Your Excellency, if he does not speak, if Roberto keeps silence, I shall cry aloud! There's my mother to be considered, Your Excellency! Roberto arrested? It would kill my mother! And our name?"

At this cry, Francesco D'Atri's face lost its composure.

"Your mother . . . yes . . . your mother . . ."

he murmured; and, bowing his head, buried his face once more in his hands; he remained for a while in this attitude, then his body began to heave as though with stifled sobs. As a young man he had known, at Turin, Donna Caterina Laurentano and Stefano Auriti, of whom this son now reminded him so vividly; he saw himself as he was then; saw Roberto as a boy; thought of a certain night at sea, with that boy asleep on his knee, an hour after they sailed from Quarto . . . ah, between that night and this, what a gulf!

Giulio Auriti, seeing the old Minister's massive shoulders shake, felt ashamed.

At length he uncovered his face and, still stooping, with his eyes on the ground, his hands fluttering in accompaniment to his words:

"What will you cry? . . . what will you cry?" he asked him. "The disgrace of us all? We are all tarred with the same brush! You mean to tell me that you know why Selmi took this money in your brother's name? And you will cry aloud my disgrace as well!"

"No, Your Excellency!" Auriti at once protested, horrified at the suggestion.

"Yes indeed!" went on Francesco D'Atri, rising to his feet. "All tarred with the same brush, I tell you! All . . . all. . . . The shame of it is killing me. . . . Mud, up to here!"

He clutched his throat in both hands.

"It is stifling me! This . . . I have had to think

of this! Our greatest names. . . . You think only of your brother! Nothing, it is true, nothing ever stayed in his hand; but he passed the money on to the other man. . . . And is not that a disgrace? How do you excuse it? What is it you cry aloud? Your brother promises, your most worthy brother guarantees, in those bills, the filthy traffickings of his friend”

“Without naming him!” said Giulio Auriti through his clenched teeth, laughing with anger, shame, scorn. “That is why they have not been spirited away!”

“But when panic has seized hold of them all!” Francesco D’Atri shouted in his face, in a voice stifled by rage. “A quarrel among thieves, who steal by night, with trembling fingers, blindly; they shuffle things up, take some away, stick others in; and all the time, from their bag, from their pockets, the booty is tumbling out; and in the scuffle, crawling among their feet, there are those who rob the robbers, who fasten upon some paper or other that has dropped, and run off to do a deal in shame: ‘Here you are, gentlemen, the greatest names in Italy! Here you have honour! Here you have the glories of the country!’ Don’t make me speak of it . . . I know to whom I am speaking! But now . . . I have had more than enough . . . it sticks in my teeth. It is not in human nature, I quite realize, it is not in human nature to expect Roberto to keep silence: for his

own sake, for his mother's, for yours, for the name you bear . . ."

"Roberto?" said Auriti. "Why, Your Excellency knows Roberto, he'll be quite capable of silence. Selmi himself . . ."

"If Roberto keeps silence?" asked D'Atri, as though he were still in doubt.

"But I shan't, Your Excellency!" Auriti hastened to repeat. "I tell you beforehand: I shall not, for my mother's sake!"

"Wait!" D'Atri went on, as though commanding silence. "If I am speaking to you like this, it means that I have something to say to you."

Giulio Auriti gazed anxiously in his face. But D'Atri did not meet his gaze; it troubled, not to say annoyed him; he saw lying on the ground the glove that had dropped from the young man's hand at the beginning of their interview, and felt more strongly than ever the sense of intolerable oppression which the sight of any object caused him at this time. He took his eyes from it, and said darkly:

"You understand that in all this . . . in all this business . . . I cannot shew my hand. . . ."

He looked at his hands, and drew them back with a gesture of disgust.

"Still," he went on, "for Roberto's sake I have spoken. . . . Only this evening; I said . . . I . . . recalled . . . his deserts. . . . Perhaps—listen to what I am saying—these compromising

papers, on the strength of which a warrant has already been issued . . . yes! But—listen—these papers . . .”

He could not utter the word; with a swift, expressive wave of his hand he implied it: “gone!” “However,” he at once continued, “since his name has already come out, to remove all suspicion of his being implicated, to leave no trace behind . . .”

“We must pay?” Auriti asked, faintly. “And where? How?”

D’Atri shrugged his shoulders crossly.

“Forty thousand lire, Your Excellency . . .”

“I cannot provide you with them. . . . You must find them. . . . And quickly! You realize, it is the only way. . . .”

“Money taken from some one else . . .” groaned Auriti.

“How do you mean, taken?” asked D’Atri angrily. “You must admit. . . .”

“For some one else!” protested Giulio.

“Are you a child?”

“No, Your Excellency: the difficulty is . . . Where am I to find it? How am I to find it?”

“Look for it . . . you have rich relatives . . . your cousin . . .”

“Lando?”

“Or your uncles . . .”

Giulio Auriti remained lost in thought, weighing the probability of success that this way offered, amid the obstacles that already blocked the

path: in Lando's case, the hated shadow of Selmi; in his uncles', the unshakable pride of his mother. How was her will ever to be bent to ask for financial help to meet this indefinite liability of her son, from that brother? In the process of bending, she would undoubtedly be broken! He thereupon decided that he himself would apply to Lando: he himself, at all costs, to spare his mother that supreme sacrifice.

"How long?" he asked.

"Soon . . ." D'Atri repeated. "Let me see . . . in five days, or six at the most. . . ."

Giulio Auriti, at once losing all sense of time, carried away already by the part that he had to play, took his leave and departed in haste, frowning, as though he had to go off at once to his cousin's house.

Francesco D'Atri watched him leave the room; then sat for a while perplexed, frowning, one hand rubbing the back of the other, as though he were racking his brains to remember what he still had to do. All of a sudden, he again saw lying on the ground, on the red carpet, the white glove that had dropped from Auriti's hand.

That glove left lying there seemed to him a sign that he could not, henceforward, isolate himself altogether from the things, people, thoughts, by which he felt himself stifled: always a trace, a footprint, some vestige would remain, resurgent or ineradicable, like the recurring phantom of a dream.

And as though that glove might be interpreted as a proof that he himself was compromised, Francesco D'Atri bent down cautiously to pick it up with a shudder of disgust and slipped it into his pocket, furtively.

Unseen tears.

Donna Giannetta, wearing a loose wrapper, with a becoming cap of lace and ribbons on her head, was waiting meanwhile in her bedroom, reclining in a deep and massive armchair of grey leather, with her legs crossed, teasing her lower lip with restless fingers. She kept her eyes sharply fixed on the toe of her red velvet slipper as it peeped out and disappeared beneath the hem of her skirt with the gentle rocking motion of her tilted leg.

It was the first time that her husband had informed her with that air and in that tone that he wished to speak to her. He had never said anything to her before, when he might have had a reason for speaking. What could he have to say to her, now?

She had noticed that, for some months past, he had seemed gloomier and more worried than usual: but not on her account, surely; perhaps because of some parliamentary trouble. She had never taken the least interest in politics; she had always flatly forbidden her friends to discuss politics with her or in her presence; she never read

the newspapers, and gloried in her ignorance, enjoyed the laughter that had greeted certain of her confessions, such as that she did not know the names of her husband's colleagues in the Ministry. Did he now wish to inform her, as he had informed her once before, after the first year of their married life, that he was thinking of resigning his office? Oh, that would leave her neither hot nor cold, now . . .

But here he came. . . . At once Donna Giannetta relaxed her muscles, sank back with shut eyes in her armchair, pretending to be asleep; but, as D'Atri opened the door, she opened her eyes again wearily, as though she had really been asleep.

"Won't to-morrow do?" she asked him again, with a languid grace. "I'm so sleepy, Francesco! I shan't be able to follow you."

"You will follow me," he said in a broken voice, stroking his beard with a trembling hand. "However, if you wish it, I can say what I have to say briefly. . . ."

"You are resigning?" she inquired, placidly.

Francesco D'Atri gazed at her in astonishment.

"No," he said. "Why?"

"I thought . . ." yawned Donna Giannetta, placing her hand over her mouth.

"No, here, it is here, of our own affairs, about the household that I have to speak to you," he went on. "Be patient for a minute. I am ex-

tremely tired myself! If, however, you wish me to be brief, you must not take offence."

Donna Giannetta opened her eyes wide.

"Offence? Why?"

"Why, because, if I must be brief, I must also be very clear, and not mince matters," he replied.

"You will allow me to speak; then you will do, I hope, as I bid you, and that will be all. Listen, then."

"I'm listening," she sighed, shutting her eyes again.

Francesco held up two fingers and brandished them stiffly in the air:

"Two . . . two misfortunes have come to you," he began.

Donna Giannetta sat up:

"Two? To me?"

"One, of your own choosing," he went on. "An old misfortune. Myself."

"Oh," she exclaimed, sinking back again in her chair. "You frightened me!"

Smiling and clasping her hands behind her head, she continued:

"No . . . why?"

The loose sleeves of her wrapper slipped down, revealing her shapely arms.

"Up to the present, no," he resumed. "You have not been properly conscious of it, because, for the annoyance which I may have caused you from time to time . . ."

"Francesco, I'm so sleepy," she groaned.

"Please . . . please . . . please . . ." he said crossly. "What I mean is, that you have found a very considerable compensation for that annoyance in my . . . in my . . . shall I say, my philosophy . . ."

"Tell me at once what the other misfortune is, please!" sighed Donna Giannetta, as though she were talking in her sleep.

Francesco D'Atri sat down. He was now coming to the difficult part of his speech, and was anxious to express himself with as little crudity as possible. He rested his elbows on his knees, took his head in his hands, the better to concentrate, and spoke, gazing at the floor.

"I am coming to that. Listen. I have been obliged. . . . obliged to make certain allowances. . . . But you, I must add, are not in the least to blame. It was natural that, having to choose between your rights as a young woman and your duties as a wife, you should have preferred the former. I might have pointed out to you, long before this, that you yourself, on the day when you accepted, of your own free will, indeed with . . . with enthusiasm, these duties towards an old man, had implicitly (am I not correct?) renounced those rights; but I do not blame you for this either, because perhaps you too, at the time, were under the illusion that . . ."

At this point Francesco D'Atri raised his head and stopped speaking.

Donna Giannetta was asleep, with one arm still folded over her head, and the other stretched out towards him, as though to implore his mercy.

"Gianna!" he called, but not too loud, controlling his anger and disgust, as though it would hurt his self-esteem were she, by rousing herself at his call, to admit that she had yielded so soon to slumber, while he was speaking to her of so grave a matter. He bowed his head again and continued his speech aloud from the point at which he had broken off:

"You were under the illusion that . . . yes, that you would find it easy to perform your duties."

Donna Giannetta did not stir; on the contrary, her raised arm slipped slowly down from her head, and fell heavily on her lap. Whereupon, Francesco D'Atri sprang to his feet in fury; in another moment he would have seized that bare, outstretched arm and shaken it with the utmost violence, shouting the most brutal insults in her face. But the unconscious calm of her slumber, shameless as it appeared to him and almost a defiance, restrained him. It seemed as though she, lying there asleep, were saying to him: "Look how young and beautiful I am! What claim can you, an old man, have on me?"

Ah, what claim indeed! But that beauty of hers, what had she done with it? And what was she doing now with her youth? A shameful sacrifice! Yes, after giving herself to him, an old man, first of all! But he, at least, would have worshipped those treasures with a heart trembling and overflowing with gratitude, as a heaven-sent prize! Whereas she, with an opprobrious disdain, with unconscious cruelty, had outraged them! And nothing now could reconsecrate that beauty and that youth so basely profaned!

Shaking his head, he stole quietly from the room.

At once Donna Giannetta sprang to her feet, with a yawn.

“O-o-oh!” Seriously, at that time of night, an explanation? And why? When he ought to have spoken, mum! Now, now that she was merely bored, bored to death, did he call upon her for an explanation? The idea! Too late . . . too late. . . . When he himself, for that matter, with his cold reserve, amid the inevitable relations of the new life into which he had introduced her, in the face of the temptations to which that life exposed her, of the examples which it was continually setting before her eyes, had helped to make her dismiss as too ingenuous, too childish, and liable to provoke the derision of her neighbours the golden dream that she had cherished when she married him?

Oh yes, with absolute sincerity she had dreamed of gladdening with her radiant youth the last years of the heroic life of Francesco D'Atri, her father's old friend and comrade in arms.

Had he felt, perhaps, that she had been too precipitous, too impulsive in making up her mind to marry him, on that evening, now remote, when, the conversation in her father's house turning upon women, old men, marriage, on her asking a question he had answered, jestingly, with a melancholy smile: "Ah, if you were to marry me. . . ."?

But perhaps too he had suspected her of the ambition to become a Minister's wife! For her family, for the position to which her birth entitled her, she was almost penniless.

Francesco D'Atri might have known, however, that, in her family, decisions were always made like that, precipitately, but that such precipitation had never impaired the firmness with which the family adhered to them.

Her father, in his youth, in the gay and heedless company of all those other young men of the aristocracy of Palermo, had all of a sudden, as though in a moment of pique, rebelled against the rest of his family, who were fervently devoted to the Bourbons; and had suffered not only persecution, imprisonment, exile at the hands of the tyrannical government, but also the most cruel revenge on the part of his own father: he had been dis-

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inherited in favour of his elder brother and his sister Teresa, the wife of Don Ippolito Lauretano and mother of Lando.

And had not she herself, once upon a time, simply out of pique, on the spur of the moment, fallen out with her cousin Lando, who, being resident at the time in Palermo, in the house of his uncle the Prince of Montalto, used to come by stealth to make love to her, his *heretical* cousin, the daughter of his *heretical* uncle, to whom his other uncle (the Prince!), as though it were an act of charity of which he ought to feel ashamed, was surreptitiously conveying an allowance that was barely enough to keep him alive?

And she had refused to have anything more to do with him! She had persuaded her father to leave Palermo for Rome, in the hope that, if she got him away from the island, amid a larger circle of friends less hidebound by prejudice, he would at length condescend to let her take the line to which her mother's blood was calling her. Her mother had been a Piedmontese actress, whom her father had met at Turin, during his banishment, and had married there. Her blood, it was her blood and not her example that called to her, for she had never known her mother, who had died in giving her birth; and everyone at Palermo, and most of all her father, had always taken pains not to let her discover what her mother had been. A Montalto on the stage! Appalling! And she her-

self even, yes, she was bound to admit it, felt in her heart of hearts a secret repulsion at the idea. All the same, to hurl defiance, to bring disgrace upon that uncle of hers, who was ashamed even to support them in secret, she would easily have managed to overcome not merely that repulsion, but any other!

Lando, shortly afterwards, had himself come to settle in Rome, and had joined with her father in trying to tame, to reform her. No, no, no! Already she had become enamoured of her dream of life with Francesco D'Atri, who, ever since their first meeting, had been dazzled by her charms.

But why then had he not deemed her capable of remaining faithful to that dream. How had he failed to understand that such a doubt, such a fear, revealed by certain piteous glances, certain wistful smiles, must bitterly offend her, as must also the liberty he conceded, nay almost enforced upon her, notwithstanding that doubt and that fear? So to him her fall was inevitable and he resigned himself to it? And if he did not trust her, what merit, what reward was there in her not falling? For her own sake? Ah yes, for her own sake! Her father had recently died. Profoundly grieved and embittered, and at the same time obliged to present a smiling face to everyone, she had seen herself, even in those days of mourning, watched by Lando with coldly contemptuous eyes. In a moment of anguish, of exasperation, in a moment of

real madness, so that the contempt in those eyes might recoil upon himself as well, she had offered herself to him. Upright, magnanimous, heroic, Lando had repulsed her. Oh, and then, to avenge herself rather upon him than upon the sad and silent distrust of her old husband, she had flung herself into the arms of Corrado Selmi, and down, down, down . . . horribly, yes . . . like a drunkard, like a madwoman . . .

But enough! Had not the old man just told her that he had no fault to find with her for that? Why then should she feel remorse for it? Oh, she had never really enjoyed it! What did he want with her now?

Donna Giannetta shrugged her shoulders, and at once was aware of the movement, as though another woman had made it before her eyes. She had in a marked degree the strange faculty of observing herself like this, from without, even in moments of tense excitement, of seeing herself move, of hearing herself speak or laugh; and it almost terrified her at times, and often annoyed her; she was afraid lest her attitudes, her gestures, the sound of her voice, her sudden peals of laughter, might appear studied; it hurt her, this sudden freezing of the most spontaneous, least premeditated impulses of her nature, surprised at their birth by and in herself.

She passed her hand several times over her brow and tried to absorb herself in some thought

which would efface that vision of herself so distraught. Why, of course. The other misfortune. . . . What could that other misfortune be of which her husband wished to speak to her?

Her face darkened. Before her eyes rose the image of Selmi who, either in desperation, to check her passion for creating scandal, or from fear of losing her, now that she was beginning to tire of him, or perhaps even in revenge, had failed to prevent her from becoming a mother. Yes, there was no doubt about it: the other misfortune to which the old man had referred was her daughter, that baby. . . .

"Two misfortunes have come to you. . . . One, of your own choosing"

The other, therefore, was not. And he was right: this second misfortune had not been of her choosing.

But if he knew all, and knew that she could not feel any affection for the child, who reminded her of her hated lover, why, not an hour ago, had he let her come upon him in the room with the crying child, tinkling a bell? Why such a display of affection for the infant? Why had he sought to identify it with himself, as though to range himself by its side against her, when he said that the pair of them—he and the child—represented two misfortunes for her? What was his object?

Donna Giannetta was sorry she had pretended to be asleep. She sat for a while longer thinking,

reflecting; then stole from the room on tiptoe and, in the darkness, holding her breath, cautiously, feeling her way, crept to the door of her husband's room. She listened, then stooped down and peeped in through the keyhole.

Francesco D'Atri, sitting there in his own room, as he had just been sitting in hers, with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands, was crying!

Donna Giannetta felt a long shudder run down her spine, and drew back in confusion, overcome by a stupefaction mingled with dismay.

He was crying!

She stood there, trembling, her spirit in a tumult, incapable of framing a thought. Then, suddenly, afraid of his opening the door and catching her eavesdropping, she turned back towards her own room. But, as she passed like a thief in the night by the door of the room in which the child slept, she stopped.

The child, too, was crying! Both of them. . . .

Without thinking, as though trying to find a place of refuge that would conceal her from herself at that moment, she opened the door and went in.

The nurse, sitting upright in bed, was in despair. The child, after a short spell of restless sleep, had begun to writhe again in convulsions and was wailing as before.

Donna Giannetta could not make out, at first,

what the nurse was saying; she put out her hand to touch the agonized child, and at once drew it back with a start. How cold the child was! But she must be hushed. . . . This crying was unendurable. . . . Didn't she want the breast? Perhaps she was bound too tightly? She began to unwind the wrappings with her own hands. Oh what poor little purple legs . . . and how they trembled, in the jerking spasms. . . . She tried to hold them still; but they were freezing! She was freezing all over, poor little creature. . . . How, in what could she cover her? There, the tester of the cradle. . . . Quick, quick.

Donna Giannetta took the child in her arms, pressed it to her bosom, firmly and gently, and began to walk up and down the room, rocking her daughter with the swaying motion of her body, a thing she had never done before. And she was amazed to find that she knew how to do it. She felt against her bosom the contractions of the aching little stomach, she could almost feel the gurgling flow of tears in that cold and tender little body. Almost unconsciously, then, she began to cry too, not out of pity for the little one, no . . . or rather perhaps yes, at the sight of its sufferings . . . but she cried also because . . . she did not herself know why.

Gradually the infant, as though it felt the warmth of the mother's love which for the first time in its life was comforting it, grew quiet again.

Donna Giannetta was by this time tired, dead tired, yet she continued for a while longer to pace the floor, bringing her hand down gently, at each step, on the child's back. Then she stopped; with the utmost precaution, so as not to awaken the child, she lifted it from her bosom; sat down and laid it on her lap; made a sign to the nurse to remain in bed, and, by the faint glimmer of the nightlight, began to study her daughter. She saw the little creature, quiet now by her intervention, lying there on her lap, as she had never seen it before. Perhaps because she had never done anything for it before. Poor little thing, growing up all this time without affection, without care. . . . As though it were to blame!

She screwed up her eyes, as though to banish a hateful feeling. . . . But no! How was the child to blame for having been born?

And then in an instant, as she gazed at her daughter, she realized what her husband had wished to say to her. He was and felt himself to be an old man, and knew that he could not fill her life; but she had a daughter, now; and a daughter can and must fill the life of her mother. He might have created a scandal, and had not done so; not only that, he had even given this child, which was not his own, the prestige of his name, of his position, and . . . yes, his love as well. Very well, she, the mother, would do well to give

her own daughter affection, care, an example of blameless conduct.

This, yes, no doubt about it, this was what he had wished to say to her. And she had pretended to be asleep. . . .

Hour after hour Donna Giannetta remained there, that night, with the child on her lap. She thought with the bitterest regret of her own sweet girlish dream; and, with disgust, of what men had offered her in exchange for that dream. . . . Stupid pretences, horrid vulgarities. . . . Then, gradually, she was overpowered by sleep.

Before daybreak, Francesco D'Atri, passing along the corridor on the way to his study, saw the door of the nurse's room standing ajar and put in his head. He was amazed to find his wife inside, asleep in an armchair, with the child in her arms. He stole softly into the room to look at her, and felt his amazement dissolve, as a tremor ran through his veins, in an unspeakable emotion. He stooped down and brushed her forehead with a kiss.

Donna Giannetta stirred; she too was amazed, at first, at finding herself there, with the child on her lap; then smiled—saw herself smile—and, holding out her hand to her husband and gazing at him with eyes full of a new joy, asked him:

“Is this what you wanted?”

CHAPTER II

In the glory of Rome.

FOR the last three weeks, everybody, even those who were hurrying about their business with their thoughts elsewhere, had been turning round and stopping to gaze at a gnarled and weather-beaten old man, with a little knapsack on his back, four medals on his breast and a big black hat, from beneath the brim of which escaped a cataract of hair, his yellow locks tumbling over the tangled fleece of his beard. This old man walked as in a dream, his eyes glistening with tears of joy, without for a moment suspecting the extraordinary figure that he was cutting in the streets and piazze of Rome, in his comical attitude and with his awkward air of being in strange surroundings, like a tamed savage.

But, now that he had left at Valsanìa his shaggy cap, his hobnailed shoes and gun, and had put on the new suit of blue broadcloth and, beneath his coarse shirt of violet flannel, a second shirt of linen, which flowed out, white and soft, at his neck and wrists; with that big black hat and his polished shoes, Mauro Mortara was confident of being as smartly dressed as any of them. His

jacket did, indeed, bulge a little over the hips . . . but his pistols, ah, he had made a vow that he would never part company with them. The four medals, lastly, which might be seen pinned to his flannel shirt, on his breast, he had brought with him (asking the General's leave, first) simply to prove that he was a person worthy to walk the streets of Rome, that he was entitled to the privilege, had won the honour of beholding her. All his papers were in his knapsack.

How was he to suppose that those medals, in a Rome steeped in opprobrium and mud in these days of party strife, could only raise a contemptuous smile on people's lips, now that the label "old patriot" had become almost a brand of infamy?

And he laughed back at all the people whom he saw laughing, without the remotest suspicion that they were laughing at him, believing indeed that they were sharing in his joy, in that joy watered with tears which, radiating round him like a beacon light, dazzled his vision of everything.

He saw nothing more of Rome than this joy in being there; and everything, in that blaze of hallucination, presented itself to him in a magical, vaporous guise; nor was he conscious of the ground beneath his feet. Three or four times, as he lengthened his pace, he had overstepped the pavement and had almost fallen.

He went about like a drunken man, without a goal, lost, drowned in his own bliss; and whenever

there shimmered before him some magnificent sight, a fountain, a palace, a monument, down streamed a fresh flow of tears from eyes swollen with emotion.

Lando Laurentano would have given him a guide; a guide, indeed! He did not want to know; did not want anything explained to him; he was instinctively afraid that any information, any direction, any knowledge must diminish that vast, fluctuating image of greatness which his sentiment created for him.

Rome must remain for him, like the sea, unbounded.

And on his return at nightfall, tired but insatiate, to the villino on the Via Sommacampagna, where Lando lived, if he was asked whether he had seen the Colosseum, the Forum, the Capitol:

"I've seen, I've seen!" he would hasten to reply. "Don't tell me anything. . . . I've seen!"

"Saint Peter's too?"

"Oh Marasantissima! I tell you, I've seen. I don't want to know anything. One thing or another, what do I care? It's all Rome!"

What did he care to know who the horseman was with bare legs and a crown on his head, sitting on the great bronze horse, in that lofty square guarded by statues at the head of the steps, surmounted by a tower, with a portico on either side? It was in Rome? Then it must be some great one, surely, a hero of antiquity, a tri-

umphant victor, a ruler of the world. And that statue over there, the red one, sitting over the fountain, with a ball in her hand? Rome: that was Rome, with the world in her grasp, which was enough for him.

Had there not been such a crowd of people continually passing through the square, he would have stooped down and kissed the rim of the fountain, would have gone up and kissed the pedestal of the bare-legged horseman. And why were all those people bustling about up there? They were working, working to make Rome greater still. They were all toiling to that end. And Rome, Rome, there she was: once again, before long, she would be holding the whole world, like that, in the hollow of her hand!

Was he really—he, Mauro Mortara—in Rome? Was it actually he that was breathing the air of Rome? Was it he whose feet were treading the pavements of Rome? Was he beholding all these grandeurs? Or was it a dream? Ah, his eyes might close now, after this crowning mercy! Having seen Rome, they had seen all that there was to see. Having set his signature there, in the Pantheon register, by the tomb of Vittorio, he might now die: he had recorded his presence in this life, had answered the roll call of history.

How astounding! They seemed to have sprung up before his eyes, those dark, towering columns. Doubtful whether it might not be a church, he had

refrained at first from entering by the half-open gate in the railings, as he saw other people do. . . . In coming to Rome, he had made the stipulation that he was going to give the churches a wide berth! Worship God, yes, but in heaven. . . . And indeed he had not set foot in Saint Peter's even. He put himself in the priests' hands? Maramèo! With suspicion in his eyes, he had glared at the Vatican, pressing the butts of his pistols against his hips with his elbows.

Was this a church then also? He was just going to inquire when a man came up to him, selling photographs of Rome: "The Pantheon . . . tomb of the King. . . ."

"In there?"

And immediately he had gone in. That round, staring eye in the cupola, through which you could see the sky, the altar opposite had somewhat disconcerted him. Where was the King's tomb? There it was, to the right, towering up, in bronze. . . . And he had gone towards it, timidly; he had seen beneath the tomb the two veterans on guard, with medals on their breasts, the register for the signature of visitors, and, with a smile in eyes glazed by tears, had opened his jacket a little way to let them see that he had the right to sign.

The two veterans had not quite understood, perhaps, what he meant, and, seeing him laugh and cry simultaneously, had perhaps taken him for a lunatic. One of them, indeed, as though to re-

assure himself, had inquired of him with a wave of the hand: "Sign?"

Yes, he had replied, with a nod: presently, after the rest had finished; for, what with his unpractised hand, his swimming eyes, and above all his emotion, it might take him a long time to write his name!

Finally, left alone with the veterans, after he had scrawled, as best he could, in the register, letter by letter, his name, surname and birth-place:

"Ah, from Girgenti . . . a Sicilian?" he had heard one of them ask, who had been following the movement of the pen with his eyes. "Did you serve in the Sixty campaign?"

"There they are!" he had answered, swelling with pride, pointing to his medals. "And this one, for Forty-Eight!"

"Ah, you're a veteran of Forty-Eight. . . . And are you a *sufferer*?"

"A sufferer? What do you mean?"

"Have you the pension for political sufferers?"

A pension! He? Why should he draw a pension? He had nothing. . . . He didn't even know that it existed, this pension; even if he had known, he would never have applied for it. Take money for what he had done? He would let his hands drop off first!

The other two, who were Piedmontese, had begun to laugh, exchanging a glance of merriment.

They were applauding him—he supposed—of course they were. Just as he was applauded, in the villino, every evening, by Raffaele the footman and the boy Torello, after a stern rebuke from their master, who had caught them at a moment when they were fooling him to the top of his bent.

To Mauro's exclamations of joy, astonishment, enthusiasm, satisfaction, to his ingenuous reflexions as to the greatness of the country, Lando Laurentano, albeit filled in these days with anger and disgust, had made no reply; he had suppressed a smile even when his dear old man, one evening, had come in to announce to him, still exulting in the experience:

“I have seen the King! I have seen the King! Oh, my boy, my dear boy, . . . how could I ever have believed such a thing? Quite white . . . as white as I am. . . . What it must cost him to sit there! What he must have to think of! Ay, he's the axle! And that's saying little: the axle on which the whole thing turns. . . . And do you know? He bowed to me! If the carriage hadn't been going so fast, I should have gone down on my knees, as sure as God's in heaven!”

Oh, to feel that heart beat in his own breast for a moment!—Lando Laurentano had thought with emotion and envy. Oh, to be able with that faith, with that purity of intention, to nourish a dream, a vaster dream; to face sterner conflicts for its

sake and to win, thereby tasting a purer and greater joy than his!

As though to retemper his metal, to wash his spirit clean of all the filth that was spouting at this time from the life of the nation, he had plunged with a sense of relief, revival, refreshment into this old man's talk; strange talk, it was true, but a perfect fount of purity and faith.

The sight of him, his presence in Rome at this time, gave a filthier, a viler appearance to all those who, having had the good fortune to be born at a supreme and glorious moment, had put it to their personal profit, like covetous tradesmen and dishonest speculators.

What did he know of them, what could he know, this old man, who, after giving the best of his strong and simple nature to his country, had withdrawn into solitude to draw fantastic pictures of the fruit that his work must certainly have borne, confident that all the others had acted like himself? He did not think: he merely felt: a burning flame, that rejoiced in its own light and heat, and gave life to all around it with that light.

And, certainly, just as now he did not notice the shower of mud through which he was passing, radiant with joy and enthusiasm, so for thirty years past in Sicily he had never noticed the horrors of all sorts of injustice, the desolation of neglect, the shattering of illusions, the cries and threats of the oppressed.

Preoccupied, alarmed by the daily increasing gravity of the news that reached him from the Island, Lando would have been glad of some information from him, if only about the Province of Girgenti; but he had never so much as hinted this to him, knowing well that it would at once have spoiled all the old man's holiday to let him know that he, the General's grandson, was on the side of those whom Mauro was bound, in good faith, to regard as enemies of the country, and was accordingly an enemy of the country himself.

Instead, he had inquired after his father.

"You've got to come down there with me!" had been Mauro's curt response. "You are the thief; I'm the policeman. And you can thank God he sent me after you! He might have sent a squad of those terrible great dolls of his, with their Captain Sciaralla."

Lando's lips had parted in a pained smile. Whereupon Mauro had clapped his hand to his forehead, with:

"There I go! But how can I help it? He even sends them to me, to Valsania, dressed up like that, to his Father's house! My heart revolts within me and I see red at times, I swear to you! However, what were we saying? Oh yes . . . what do you think of this new freak of his? Going and marrying again, at his age, and one of that clan, too! Why, by all the saints in heaven, the man's father, I tell you, the man's father went to

church for the Te Deum when your grandfather was sent into exile! And he, he, this Don Flaminio Salvo. . . . Corpo di Dio, do you know that I have had to put up with him for a whole month at Valsania? Oh, he's a feckless creature, your uncle Don Cosmo! He ought to have looked him straight in the face and said no. 'What!' he ought to have said. 'Flaminio Salvo at Valsania?' No, Sir! Nothing of the sort! Only too delighted! And do you know how I have been living for the last month? Like an animal that goes about everywhere searching for a hole or cranny to hide in. If I set eyes on him, sangue di . . . I'd catch him here, I tell you, by the throat, and then, mark my words, I'd squeeze the life out of him. You know what I'm like when the fit takes me, what a wild beast I become. . . . However! This Don Flaminio Salvo, in Forty-Eight, what did he do? I can tell you what he did, he went straight off and reported to the Bourbon police where Don Stefano Auriti was hiding with your aunt Donna Caterina. It's a fact! And now, at Girgenti, he holds all the priests in the hollow of his hand! But God, oh, yes, God has chastised him! His wife is mad! A pity his daughter . . . no, she's not like him: she's good, his daughter is; and as pretty as she's good. . . . But don't you ever take it into your head to marry her! You, my dear boy, bear your grandfather's name, remember that! And the name Gerlando Laurentano ought to be

. . . what shall I say? No, my dear boy, you mustn't laugh . . . these things are not to be laughed at in my presence!"

"I am laughing," Lando had informed him, "because my father has chosen a good ambassador to persuade me to come to his wedding!"

And Mauro, throwing out his hands:

"Oh, what of that? I tell him the same to his face. Besides, if I don't say things, you can read them just the same on mine. . . . A man must act as he feels. But you have got to come back with me, my boy, because your father's word is law. You are not going of your own accord. He has made his bed, and he must lie on it. If he has chosen to go that way, what is to be done? You will come for a few days to Valsania for a rest; you will lose your temper a bit with that fool your uncle Don Cosmo; but after all I'm there, there's the General's room, untouched, just as it was. . . . Go in there, and your breast . . . oh, it swells, and your heart thumps. . . . I don't know about you, but I should think . . . Excuse me, let me listen to the clock."

He had come close to him, had placed his ear against his chest, over the heart, and, with a roguish laugh, had concluded:

"I see! Ladies' time."

Deeds, not thoughts!

Perfectly calm and cool to the outward eye, Lando Laurentano nourished within him a dark and bitter hatred of the times in which he was fated to live; a hatred which never sought relief in invective or reproaches, for he knew that, even if his complaints had found an echo, as did those of so many genuine or pretended malcontents, there was nothing to be gained by them.

His anger was like the fermentation of must that has gone sour in a dirty barrel.

The vintage had been gathered. All the vine leaves were now yellow; they curled and shrivelled on their stems; began to fall; the bare canes writhed in the autumnal mist, like a man stretching his limbs in a long yawn of boredom; over the grey expanse of the fields, in the damp fog, nothing now remained save a slight, slow, silent, rustle of drifting leaves.

Yes, the season had yielded its fruit. He had come when the vintage was already over. The rich and generous juice, gathered in Sicily with impetuous joy, blended with the dry, sharp juice of Piedmont, then with the rough, stinging juice of Tuscany, and now with the medicinal juice, gathered late in season and half by stealth in the Lord's vineyard, carelessly stored in three vats and in barrels, carelessly treated, now with bark and now with alum, had gone irremediably sour.

A sterile age, of necessity, was his, like every age that follows a period of exceptional exuberance. Nothing to do but look on, sad and idle, at the spectacle of all those who had lent a hand to the task, and preferred now to put the finishing touches unaided; some of them, however, over-excited and almost raving, others already tired and basking with a senile smile of self-sufficiency in the satisfaction of an arduous labour that has somehow been finished, the defects in which they did not choose either to behold themselves or to let others behold.

A miserable fate, indeed, that of the hero who does not die, the hero who outlives his own fame!

For in truth the hero always dies with the heroic moment: the man survives, and fares ill. Alas for him if his soul does not explode with the force of that driving wind which inflates it, strains it and makes it assume in an instant a forbidding mask of greatness! . . . After that strain, when the wind has fallen, the outraged soul cannot settle again within its normal dimensions, does not recover its equilibrium: swollen still and distended in one place, flabby and battered in another, it collapses altogether and, like a balloon when its valve has begun to leak, stumbles and is torn by every stump on the roadside over which it had flown before.

Lando Laurentano sought no outlet for his

anger, because, having been too young at first to do anything, and finding nothing now left for him to do, he scorned the too obvious course of saying that the others had done wrong. To do things . . . yes, to be able to do things, without talking! The others had done things. Now it was time for talk. The others talked so much and to so little purpose, that he might as well spare his breath.

He saw that the men to whose lot it had fallen to do things, had long been hesitating between two conceptions, one vacuous, the other servile: the conceptions of a classic and of a romantic Italy: a toga-clad phantom, and a puppet to be dressed up in the livery or at the bidding of foreigners: a rhetorical Italy, composed of school-room memories, the same perhaps for which Petrarch had longed, which had inspired Cola di Rienzo, a Republican State; and a foreign Italy, or one wholly foreignized in soul and customs. Unfortunately, the trend of history pointed to the realization of the latter conception. And, after all, it was no more than the substitution of one form of rhetoric for another; for the pedantic imitation of the ancients, the absurd imitation of foreigners. Always imitation. "Oh Italians," Guerrazzi had cried from his cell in the Murate of Florence, "monkeys, not men!"

Its most generous impulses stifled by so-called reasons of State, the nation had been brought to being by concession and compromise, accident and

coincidence. A single fire, a single flame ought to have coursed from end to end of Italy to melt and forge her several members into one living body. That the fusion had failed was the fault of those who had reckoned the open flame dangerous, and had preferred the cold light of their own limited, calculating intellects. But if the flame had let itself be quenched, was not this a sign that it had not in itself the force and heat that were required? What a blaze of bright and devouring fire from Sicily, up north as far as Naples! From there again, in later years, the flame had shot forth to reach the walls of Rome. . . . Wherever it had been obliged to halt, at Aspromonte, or on the heights of the Trentino, it had left an empty gap, a severed member.

Could not Italy fashion herself in any other way? A sign that events were not yet ripe, or that someone had lacked the energy and daring to bring things to a head. Too many calculations and dark thoughts and vacillations and restraints and timidities had sterilized the creation of the country.

What was to be done now? Where there is a will, yes, there is always time to do good. But a modest, humble, patient good, Lando Laurentano felt that such was not for him. They had offered him, at the last general election, a seat in one of the divisions of Palermo: neither prayers nor pressure, nor the call of party discipline had

availed to make him reconsider his refusal. He, at Montecitorio, at such a moment? Better to drown himself in a sewer!

From his boyhood he had trained himself to a strict and strenuous course of reading, not so much from the necessity or a passion for culture, as to be able to think and judge on his own initiative, and so to retain, in conversation with other people, his own spiritual independence.

He had here, in his lonely villino on the Via Sommacampagna, a well stocked library, in which he was in the habit of spending several hours every day. But, as he read, he was irresistibly led on to translate all that he read into action, into living reality; and, if he had a volume of history in his hands, he would feel an indescribable sense of discomfort at seeing, reduced to words, what had once upon a time been life; reduced to ten or twenty lines of print, uniformly arranged one after another, in precise order, what had been a disordered movement, stir and turmoil. He would fling the book from him, in a fit of disgust, and begin to pace up and down the room.

What a strange impression they made upon him then, all those books in the prison of their tall, wide shelves, which covered the four walls of the room from end to end! From the two low windows that overlooked the garden, came in the shrill, incessant, deafening twitter of the countless little birds that made their daily rendezvous

there on the pine, aquiver with more wings than foliage. He compared that continuous, unwearying chorus, that frenzied tumult of living voices, with the words shut up in those dumb books, and his contempt for them increased. Artificial compositions, a fixed life, stereotyped in unalterable forms, logical constructions, mental architecture, inductions, deductions—away with them all!

Movement, life, not thoughts!

What anguish, what torture at times, did he let himself be absorbed in the thought that he too, inevitably, with the conceptions, the opinions that he sought to form of men and things, with the fictions that he created, with the affections, the desires that arose in him, was arresting, was fixing in and all around himself in definite forms the continual flow of life! But if he himself, with his body, was a definite form, a form that had motion, that could follow, up to a certain point, the flow of life, until, his body stiffening ever more and more, its motion, already slackened, should altogether cease! Well, on certain days, he would feel a strange antipathy to that body of his, so tall and slim, for his sallow brown face with its too wide forehead, its black, square-cut beard, its imperious nose in contrast to those eyes, the eyes of a drowsy, voluptuous Arab. He would gaze at them in the glass as though they did not belong to him. Within that body of his, meanwhile, in what he called his soul, the flow continued ob-

scurely, creeping beneath the dykes, flooding beyond the limits he had set himself when forming a consciousness, constructing a personality. But it was possible also that all those artificial forms, assailed by the current in a moment of tempest, might crumble; while that part of the current which did not trickle away beneath the dykes and beyond the limits, but revealed itself plainly to him, and which he had carefully canalized in his affections, in the duties that he had set himself, in the habits that he had developed, might in a moment of flood burst its banks and sweep everything away.

Yes: and it was for such a moment of flood that he longed! It was for this that he had immersed himself in the study of the new social questions, in the criticism of those men who, armed with imposing arguments, were trying to raze to its foundations a constituted order of things convenient for some, unfair to the majority of mankind, and to arouse at the same time in that majority a will and a sentiment which spurred them on to strip, destroy, scatter all those forms, the accumulation of centuries, in which life had become ponderously set. Would that will, would that sentiment arise in the majority in sufficient strength to bring about an immediate upheaval? They still lacked the necessary consciousness and education. To make them conscious, to educate, to prepare them: there was an ideal! But when was

it to be realized? A slow, long and patient task this too, alas!

On his vast estates in Sicily, in the Province of Palermo, which had come to him from his mother, he had already granted his peasants the fairest co-operative terms, expressly forbidding his chamberlain to burden with even a nominal interest the advances liberally made them for seed and for all the various outlay entailed in agriculture; he had founded, and maintained out of his own pocket a number of village schools; time and again, whenever he was asked, he had contributed largely to the reserve funds raised for the support of the peasants and sulphur workers in their resistance to the landlords and pit owners; he paid for the printing of a party newspaper: *La Nuova Età*, which was issued every Sunday in Palermo.

His chamberlain, Rosario Piro, sent up protests, month after month, in interminable letters full of commonsense and malapropisms: protested and washed his hands of the whole affair. Poor Piro! What a state those hands of his must be in, after all that washing!

Lando, perhaps without noticing it, or even in the belief that he was leading a sober existence, was spending a great deal on himself. His experience of the emptiness and silliness of the life of people who made a profession of cutting a figure in the so-called world of fashion, in clubs,

smart hotels and restaurants, gaming-rooms, on race courses, in the hunting field, he had bought not from any wish to acquire it, but so that he might not appear to be different from other people in a matter of so little importance to himself, and one that after all entailed no sacrifice, in view of his gentlemanly upbringing and social connexions; he continued to buy this experience, in instalments, and at a high price, whenever he felt an overpowering need to attach himself to the solid foundations of human beastliness so as to escape from or to resist certain strange impulses, certain caprices of the imagination, the maddening uncertainties of the brain. He would devote himself then to violent exercise with a coolness which at times repelled himself even, or to sensual pleasures, the scented and dazzling outward refinement of which was powerless to conceal their grim vulgarity.

But in his inertia he felt the gnawing tooth; amid the cravings of his enforced inactivity, he felt himself stifled, all the more in that he compelled himself to repress those cravings, rather than let himself be conspicuous, ever. And while he smiled, as he listened at the club or elsewhere to the silly chatter of his friends, dangling his foot or stroking his beard, he would coldly imagine some sudden outburst which would throw into a confusion at once ridiculous and alarming all this fatuous, artificial world, in which it seemed

incredible to him that other people could seriously live and find contentment. Other people? What about himself? In what world did he live? He was not contented, it was true; but what did he gain by being discontented? Why, these cravings. No ephemeral desires, no satisfying of appetites did his senses find there: to withdraw would not have cost him any effort of will; indeed, he had to make an effort to remain there, as though to him it were the performance of an irksome duty, the payment of a penalty.

On the other hand, would it not drive him mad if he were to remain entirely by himself? So great was his discontent with his own arid existence, with no germ in it of warm, living desires. At night, sometimes, as he returned home with the blackest of black dogs on his back, he felt so strongly the impression that he was going to find, in the solitude of his villino, his own spirit, which had not stirred from the house, and would greet him presently from the mirror with a sneer on its face, and ask him if it was a fine night outside, if there was a moon, if one of the electric lamps had not spluttered at him as he passed, or if Saint Paul, tired of standing, had not sat down upon the Antonine column; so strongly did he feel this impression, that he would turn back, to keep his body out of doors, and not expose it to such derision. There it was, his fine body, sleek and well-tended, smartly dressed . . . who was going

to quarrel with it at that time of night? He would stop for a moment to listen to the nocturnal silence round him; it seemed to him that this silence was burrowing backward into time, into the past history of Rome, and was becoming terrible. A shudder ran down his back. The night lay heavy upon a city thousands of years old, through which he was passing, an empty, pigmy shadow, which a breath of air would have swept away.

From these not infrequent lapses he was invariably recalled to himself by the arrival from Palermo, uninvited and always ready for anything, of a friend, perhaps the only true friend that he had: Lino Apes, editor of the *Nuova Età*: Socrates, Lando called him. And indeed, Lino Apes did remind one of Socrates, in his ugliness and in his humour: tall, all neck and no shoulders, with arms that dangled down to his knees, a receding forehead, a pug nose, and a pair of keen, darting eyes, which began to laugh before his mouth, both eyes and mouth half hidden by his thick overhanging eyebrows and bristling moustaches respectively.

Without a penny to his name, amid incredible hardships cheerfully borne, he had supported himself during his student days, and graduated in Literature and Philosophy; devoid of ambition, he had turned to teaching on lines of his own in an elementary school, greatly to the delight of his pupils and the annoyance of the headmaster, who

dared not rebuke him officially. He spent the rest of the day squandering in conversation the inexhaustible treasure of his ideas, which, after a long circulation, returned to him barely recognizable, each of them stamped by the foolishness or vanity of whoever had appropriated it. His talk was a perennial fount of the most specious arguments, from which would suddenly flash a new and strange light that made everything unexpectedly simple and clear.

Lino Apes had many times proved to Lando Laurentano that, in calling himself a Socialist, he was lying with the most innocent sincerity; he saw himself not as he was, but as he would have liked to be. Which, he maintained, is what happens to all of us, and makes us ridiculous.

Socialist, a man without discipline? Socialist, an enemy, not of this or that order, but of order as a whole, of every definite form? A Socialist he was for the moment: for that great moment of flood for which he longed. But the majority of Socialists, for that matter, were just the same, and he might console himself with the thought, or rather feel contempt for them. In any event, he would always have one distinguishing feature: that of being the one rich man among a crowd of poor and of having his blood sucked by them all, including himself, Lino Apes, editor of the *Nuova Età* and private inspector of the village schools endowed by H.E. the young Prince of Laurentano.

Lando enjoyed listening to him. Anything that other people might say to him left him discontented and unsatisfied, as did anything that he might say himself, albeit he quite recognised that it was often to the point. He recognised also that ever so many people spoke better than himself; but what after all was the value of all those words, all those arguments, all those sound ideas, all those sensible observations? Inwardly, he uttered an exasperated cry of protest: "No, no, it is not that!" though he could not for the life of him have told what else it could be. But all the rest, the sparks, the lightning flashes that blazed in his spirit, were not to be expressed in words: he would have been thought mad, had he expressed them. Well, Lino Apes, Socrates, had this faculty: he could express them, yet he was reckoned wise.

He had received from him, of late, letter after letter, each of them urging him in the strongest language to return to Sicily. Never had the cocks in the scorched farmyards held their crests so fiery and erect, never had they hurled their clarion more defiantly across the fields to salute the rising sun, which for the first time, after an agelong night, was stirring the consciousness of the workers. Consciousness? For want of a better word. For the Church they had substituted the Fascio; and looked to it for all the miracles demanded in vain of its predecessor. But fa-

naticism was at its height: and so miracles were possible and the task of the spellbinders mere child's play. The floodgates were strained to bursting point, and in another moment the torrent might sweep away "the tainted seats of the bourgeois domination" unprotected now by a military garrison. He must hasten to the spot and take action before Sicily was invaded by troops and the reaction began.

Lando was stirred by the call to action, but could not tear himself from Rome at the moment. The bank scandal was like a fiery crater yawning before the steps of the national Parliament: one after another, as they emerged from its doors, the putrid carcasses of the "old patriotism" would be hurled into it; and that fire, by devouring them, would purge the country. The spectacle was quite enlivening in its obscene terror. But it might not have been so, perhaps, to Lando, had he not been waiting with fierce anxiety to see engulfed in that crater one man: Corrado Selmi.

Ah, at last! . . . Already he could see him like a tree half stripped by the heat of the approaching lava: perhaps even before being touched by the devouring tide of fire, he would vanish in a roaring blaze. And Lando hoped that his spirit would be illuminated by that blaze. Ah, if only for a moment! The harm that man had done him was past remedy: it had permanently clouded his life, had destroyed for ever all hope of turning

back, of again approaching her who in his first manhood had made him realize eternity in a flash of light: a light that sparkled from a pair of dark eyes and a fleeting smile, one evening in May, upon the lighted sea front at Palermo, amid the rattle of carriage wheels, the odour of seaweed that rose from the water, the scent of orange-blossom that was wafted from the gardens. For the divine, ineradicable memory of that instant he would certainly have returned to his cousin; almost without remorse, at least without profanation on his part, once her old husband was dead, he could once more have made her his own. And it was for this reason that he had repulsed her, when she, in a moment of madness, had sought with a frenzied desperation to cling to him. And that other had then taken a scoundrelly advantage of her.

No, he could not leave Rome at that moment.

Now, when he was summoned so urgently, for very different reasons, to Sicily, the reason for which Mauro Mortara had come could not fail to strike him as a grotesque tomfoolery. He felt that it was certainly not for the pleasure of seeing him that his father wished him to be present at this marriage ceremony, but owing to a want of confidence on Salvo's part, which he found offensive. And, as the easiest way out of the difficulty, he decided to write him a letter, giving him full reassurance, after which the marriage might

be celebrated without his having to put in an appearance.

To Lino Apes he wrote that, before moving, he would like to consult all the comrades who would be passing through Rome in the course of the next few days on their way to the Congress at Reggio Emilia. A meeting would be held in his house, at which Socrates must be present with the rest. Lando would pay the cost of the journey, as well for him as for the representatives of the principal Fasci, from whom he desired a precise statement of the circumstances in which the battle was to be engaged; and if these were really favourable, he would not hesitate for a moment to dash into the fray, to risk all, and damn the consequences.

Two days after he had posted this letter, there came to his ear the report of the Government's scandalous attempt to whitewash Selmi. This fairly turned his stomach, and in a boiling rage he decided to go off at once and set a match to the trains of powder that had been laid in Sicily. Next morning, while he was discussing his immediate departure with Mauro Mortara, he was informed that his cousin, Giulio Auriti, was at the door.

Mauro had gone twice to Roberto's house in Via delle Colonnelle, but had not found him at home. Before leaving Rome, he would have liked at least to have paid him his respects. He did not know

Giulio, having seen him two or three times only as a boy; as soon as he saw him enter the room he gave a violent start:

“Don Stefano!” he exclaimed. “Oh, my son! Don Stefano to the life. . . . Every inch of him! The same face . . . the same figure. . . .”

Then, observing that the young man, in his acute agitation, stood gazing at him with a cold, frowning perplexity:

“Don’t you know who I am?” he went on. “I am Mauro Mortara. Your father died here, in these arms, with a bullet in his breast, here, below the throat. He had a muffler round his neck, and a corner of it had been driven into the wound: he could not speak; with those eyes of yours, in his agony, while I held him up, he entrusted his son to my care, your brother, whom I was thrusting away with my elbow, screening your father’s body with my own, so that he should not see it. . . .”

Giulio Auriti clapped both his hands to his face and burst into sobs.

Lando, knowing his cousin’s rigid fibre, his icy self-control, turned and gazed at him in wonder and dismay. He went up to him; laid a hand on his shoulder:

“Giulio!”

“You would have done better, had you let him see it!” said his cousin, turning to Mauro, recovering himself instantly at the sound of his own

name. "He would have retained a more vivid impression. He was too young! And he has remained young. Young and blind. I have something to say to you," he then added, turning again to Lando, and rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand, as though to remove any trace of tears.

Mauro did not understand a word of this: his eyes fixed on the distant vision of the battlefield, he shook his head slowly, and sighed:

"A fine death! A fine death! A son may weep for it; but, when you think it over, it's a thing to rejoice at. It was a joy for us to die! What sort of death shall we have now? Old men, soiling the beds we lie on. . . . Enough; I am going. Is Don Roberto at home? I want to bid him good-bye. I have seen Rome, though, and even huddled away in a corner, devoured by flies, I can die content. . . ."

With a careless wave of his hand he left the room.

Face to face.

All through the night after his talk with Francesco D'Atri, Giulio Auriti, instead of thinking of what he ought to say to his cousin in order to obtain the help that he was driven to ask of him, anticipating a hostile reception, had, to screw up his courage for the task, summoned up, amid incessant bursts of incoherent anger, thoughts and

arguments which he would not be able to express to the other; had found comfort in saying to himself what he would not be able to say to him; had tried to convince himself that he was really entitled to such help.

And it had struck him that only in appearance had his relations with his cousin, hitherto, been cordial. What a store of undisclosed envy and rancour had necessity brought up that night from the secret depths of his being!

Until then he had been of the opinion that the lowliness of his position as a clerk in a government office, concealed, at the cost of so many sacrifices, beneath the garments of a gentleman, could not degrade him in the eyes of his rich and titled cousin, because Lando must know it was the result of his mother's proud, contemptuous act of renunciation; and that so far as nobility went, his birth was in no way inferior, in view of his father's career. But now? With Roberto unworthily compromised in this bank scandal, and himself obliged to sue for help, the foundations of his pride crumbled miserably, and with them, in an instant, those of his cordiality towards his cousin. And he had prepared himself for this talk with him as for an assault upon an enemy. An enemy, yes, for Lando would certainly refuse to help, knowing that the money in question had been taken by Selmi. He himself would be

to bear in mind, perdio, that neither would Roberto have been reduced to the position of blindly doing these favours for Selmi, in return for other favours; nor would he himself now be obliged to ask for help, had their mother not renounced her inheritance! The money for which he would ask him represented only a fractional part, after all, of the fortune which his mother had contemptuously resigned to her elder brother; and he might even claim it as an act of restitution, given this horrible necessity. His own sacrifice in asking for it would be just as great as Lando's in giving it.

Now, Mauro Mortara having left the room, after arousing that sudden emotion in him by recalling the heroic death of his father, he, face to face with his cousin who was looking at him with some dismay, waiting, anxious and friendly, for him to begin, remained for a while speechless, torn by his painful excitement. He screwed up his face in a paroxysm of grief and, wringing his clasped hands until the joints cracked:

"I need your help, Lando," he said. "This is a terrible moment for me, from which only you can deliver me, but . . . I warn you, by a considerable sacrifice on your part also, moral and material."

Lando, confused, perplexed, pained by the sight of his cousin in such agitation and distress, gathering moreover from his words the seriousness of

what he was going to ask, murmured, throwing out his hands:

"Speak. . . . Anything I can do . . ."

"Ah, no!" Giulio at once interrupted him, stung by the commonplace expression. "It is difficult, difficult, for me as well as for you, don't you know. But you must remember that my life, Lando, my mother's life, our honour, are . . . are in your hands, there you have it! Remember this, and then perhaps . . . I hope . . . you will find the strength to make the sacrifice that I ask of you."

"You alarm me!" exclaimed Lando. "Speak; what has happened to you?"

Giulio again wrung his hands, convulsively, struck his lips with them, still clasped, several times, keeping his eyes tightly shut. The swollen veins on his contracted forehead showed what a tremendous effort he was making to control himself.

"If I tell you the whole story," he broke out, wildly, "will you help me?"

"Why not?" asked Lando, in a tone of distress. "What is it? I can't until I know what it is all about."

"Myself," Giulio promptly replied. "Think that it concerns me alone, or rather my mother. Keep before your mind my mother and all, all the sorrows of our family. You do feel some regard and affection for my mother, don't you?"

"Why of course, you know I do!" Lando assured him, shewing a genuine interest. "Don't keep me in suspense, for heaven's sake!"

"Wait . . . wait . . ." Auriti begged him, as though he could not bear to strike out from this stream of tenderness into the bitter waters in which he must drown. "To us, to myself, it is everything; her pride, her sentiment . . . by reason of which, without a word of complaint at any time, we have been brought down to . . . this . . . I don't know, I really don't know how to tell you; but we have nothing else, we have never had anything else except our pride . . . and now . . . now . . ."

"Calm yourself, Giulio!" Lando again exhorted him, with a stir of impatience. "I don't understand. . . . You need me. Speak, tell me. . . . Your mother . . ."

"I have to prevent her from dying!" cried Giulio. "At any cost! And you have got to help me, Lando; and to help me you must make the sacrifice of overcoming all resentment, every reason for hatred of a man who is the cause of all this ruin; and whom I detest and curse as heartily as you do and would like to see lying dead, by the same torture, with the same infamy that he is inflicting upon us!"

Lando at once stiffened, and knitted his brows.

"You mean Selmi?" he asked. "Roberto . . . with Selmi?"

Giulio nodded his head; then, briefly, concisely, explained his brother's position and the steps that must be taken to save him, omitting any reference to his conversation overnight with H.E. the Minister D'Atri.

But Lando, already forewarned, his thoughts concentrated on a single point, gathered nothing more at first from his cousin's breathless appeal than that saving Roberto from his predicament meant saving Selmi as well, and that Selmi's safety might still be dependent upon that of his cousin. He looked Giulio in the face, as though he were only now conscious of his presence in the room:

"What?" he exclaimed, in amazement. "You come to me, Giulio, and ask this? To me, of all people?"

Crushed by this question, uttered in such a tone of amazement, Giulio lost his head for a moment, and, as though his passion had melted into an envenomed bitterness:

"To whom . . . to whom else?" he stammered. "You know what my family. . . . And besides . . . remember, I asked you, when I came in, to make a sacrifice. . . ."

"A sacrifice, indeed! No!" Lando shouted. "It is not in human nature! You come to me and ask this? Why, don't you know what that man means to me?"

"That is why I told you . . ." Giulio attempted to interpose.

"What did you tell me? No!" Lando again broke out. "You come to me, Giulio, and say: 'Here is the weapon, the one weapon with which you can slay the enemy who still escapes your vengeance; but no! This weapon you must not use; you must rather help me to conceal it, to destroy it, so as to save him!' That is what you come and tell me!"

"Because you are thinking of Selmi, that is why, you are thinking of Selmi and are incapable of thinking of anyone else!" Auriti moaned. "I knew it! When I have told you all, will you give me your help?"

"Help?" Lando again retorted. "You call this help? On my part, it would be complicity! Do you wish me to be your accomplice in saving Selmi?"

"There you go!" cried Giulio. "Roberto! I want to save Roberto! My mother! What do I care about Selmi? I hate him, I tell you, I detest him as much as you do! But I must save Roberto. . . ."

Lando, with a violent effort, succeeded in forcing himself to keep calm in the face of his cousin's blind, despairing obstinacy. He decided to try and reason with him.

"Excuse me," he began. "Look here, Giulio,

answer me one thing. Is Roberto guilty? Do you believe him guilty?"

"Guilty or innocent," replied Giulio, quivering with rage, "that is not the point! He is compromised!"

"But he can defend himself, good God!" Lando at once retorted.

"Thank you! I know he can. But I have got to prevent his being charged, his being arrested, don't you understand?" Auriti explained. "I know that he can defend himself! And if he should refuse to defend himself . . ."

"Oh, in that case . . . why, of course!" Lando assented. "You and I together . . ."

"No, thank you!" Giulio declined the offer, in a burst of scorn. "Help in words, thank you! I can manage that. I had no need to come to you."

"Pardon me," said Lando, with a note of irritation in his voice. "The only honest form of help . . . the only true, the only honourable defence, must be this. Payment would be complicity. Roberto ought to speak; not to make himself Selmi's accomplice, by keeping silence and paying up for him."

"And you propose, then," demanded Giulio, "that he should submit to the ignominy of arrest and imprisonment, when I can still save him from it?"

"With money?"

“With money, with money,” Giulio repeated. “Honesty, dishonesty, what are you getting at now? It is enough for me to know that he is honest, in my own conscience! Who would believe in his honesty to-morrow, if he were arrested to-day? Who ever believes in the defence, in the words of a man who has been in prison? Lando, for pity’s sake, let us make the experiment . . . think only of Roberto! You, mark my words, you refuse me your help just now, simply and solely because you wish to make Roberto the instrument of your vengeance!”

“No, that is not true!” Lando emphatically denied the suggestion. “But I cannot make myself, don’t you see, the instrument of Selmi’s salvation? You are inflicting an inhuman torture on me! I cannot, I must not submit to it! For Roberto, I would do anything! But if Roberto is hopelessly involved with Selmi, and my help to one may be of service to the other, no, I cannot give it, nor can you ask it of me!”

Giulio Auriti remained silent for a while, brooding darkly.

“Then the answer is no?” he said at length, raising his head and looking his cousin in the face.

To this categorical question, Lando, filled with a profound pity, was incapable of replying with another curt refusal. He clasped his hands together, went up to Auriti, and said:

“But quite apart from any personal reason,

Giulio, think . . . think of my associations, of my views, the ideas for which I am fighting. . . . I could not, after this, take my place among my comrades in this work of purifying the country which we have undertaken . . .”

He realized at once that he ought not to be speaking thus, and at the same time was unable to stop, albeit he noticed with dismay how his cousin's face darkened at every word that he spoke. Finally he saw him spring to his feet, convulsed with rage.

“Purifying, oh yes!” exclaimed Giulio Auriti, with a horrible sneer. “You are in a position to purify! You are the pure in heart, you people! We, I, Roberto, my father, too, if he were alive . . .”

“Giulio! Giulio!” Lando tried to stop him, genuinely pained.

But Auriti, beside himself, went on shouting:

“Tainted, all of us! And I would coin false money, yes, and rob a bank, to have these forty thousand lire, which you have got and I haven't. And because I haven't got them, I am tainted! You have them, and are pure! But just bear in mind that my mother, after all, could have had the money, and refused to take it, because she regarded it as tainted!”

Lando drew himself up to his full height and, standing in the middle of the room, looked his cousin up and down with a frigid dignity:

“My money,” he said, “is, as you know, only what came to me from *my* mother.”

But, having uttered this retort, he at once regretted it, and his face clouded with disgust at the trivial crudity of the turn the discussion was taking. It flashed across his mind that, by an unfair arrangement, in his mother’s family, too, one member had paid with a life of poverty for a warm-hearted act of rebellion; it occurred to him that among all the reasons for which, in his youthful fervour, he had wished to make Giannetta Montalto his, he had included this, namely the restoration to her of a part at least of all that had been taken from her disinherited father. He guessed that his cousin would reply to his arrogant, ill-considered assertion and would drag down the sordid squabble to lower depths still.

And indeed Giulio Auriti, contorting his worried features, striking his clenched fists together and then spreading out his hands before his eyes that were flashing with a blaze of scorn, sneered:

“Your mother’s money too, for that matter!”

And Lando, under this provocation, once again could not restrain himself.

“My mother’s money?” he demanded, planting himself in front of the other.

Giulio Auriti passed his hand over a brow cold with sweat, covered his eyes, collapsed miserably:

“Don’t make me say any more!”

Lando stood gazing at him, or rather into him;

then remarked, crudely and coldly, in a subdued tone, through his teeth, isolating each syllable:

“And even if I admitted what you think, would you have me pay a debt contracted by Selmi to pay for the whims of a woman who is in a position to object to my mother’s money? Go, go, go . . . for goodness’ sake, go away!” he broke out, screening his own eyes also. “I can never look you in the face again!”

He heard his cousin leave the room, but still remained for a long time with his hands over his face, in the horror that he felt at having touched the lurid depths of a reality to which he could never have expected to descend, and the horrible impression of which would always remain in his mind. Now, rising again from those depths, into which he had slithered for a moment, would not everything round about him seem false and vacuous and foul? In all his feelings, ideas, actions, words, would not some mark remain, the imprint of the mud he had handled?

With tight shut eyes, set teeth and lips parted, dry and bitter, he rubbed his hands vigorously. Then he opened his eyes, looked round the room; he felt himself stifling, and went across to a window that overlooked the garden.

Everything, ah, everything was the same! . . . Everything was disgusting at that moment! The pestilence was in the air. The whole social carcass was rotting, and with it his soul, all his

thoughts, all his feelings . . . everything in decay, everything filthy. . . .

To no conclusion.

Three days later, in the big library, were assembled the comrades who were on their way to the Socialist Congress at Reggio Emilia; the representatives of the more numerous Fasci of the Island, invited by Lando; a few Deputies, his friends, some Milanese of the Italian Labour Party, and Lino Apes.

Conspicuous among this crowd of men was a girl in a red jacket and black sailor hat, with a cock's feather boldly erect at one side: Celsina Pigna, who had come in place of Luca Lizio to represent the Fascio of Girgenti.

Everyone was determined not to shew surprise at her presence; but she did not fail to observe the rapid, furtive glances that all of them cast at her, especially the less youthful; and remarked, laughing quietly to herself, that the few who obstinately refrained from looking at her assumed for her benefit languid or haughty poses, and for her benefit, when they spoke, gave certain modulations to their voices, some plangent, others bold, all of which alike betrayed that animal excitement which a woman's presence is wont to arouse in men. She remarked further in more than one of them a different form of ostentation: namely, an

almost contemptuous indifference, which betrayed their secret discomfort at finding themselves in a rich and well-appointed house.

Lando Laurentano had not yet arrived. Lino Apes, in his name, had begged the company to excuse him, promising that he would join them immediately. While they waited, several groups had formed: two by the windows overlooking the garden, one by the table set at the end of the room for the chairman of the meeting. Some were pacing the floor, wrapped in thought, others were reading the titles on the backs of the books in the shelves, straining their ears to catch what was being said in one or other of the groups. A few were keeping a stealthy watch on one of the Deputies, who, striding up and down the room with his fingers thrust into the pockets of his waistcoat, kept shrugging his shoulders from time to time, thrusting his head forward and, to indicate his surprise and sympathy, stiffening the line of his mouth beneath the shaggy red moustaches that were already turning grey.

This was the Republican Deputy Spiridione Covazza, who had recently published a disparaging criticism, in a French review, of the organization of the proletariat forces in Sicily. Seeing himself avoided by everyone, he seemed by his gesture to be saying: "Incredible!" And yet he must have known that his crime was that of seeing all manner of things which other people did not

see, and of giving to them an importance which other people did not yet feel, because in the heat of passion everything seems to rise up to the level of our own feelings. Illusions: soap bubbles, which may at any moment turn into leaden bullets. As those poor peasants knew only too well who had been shot down at Caltavuturo.

He had written for that French review what he conscientiously believed to be the truth; in his usual style, rudely and crudely. But they implied that he took a savage delight in setting forth like that, at the wrong time and in the wrong place, the most unpalatable truths, in killing with the frost of his arguments all enthusiasm, every flame of the ideal, to which, notwithstanding, he was irresistibly drawn.

A beetle with the wings of a moth, so Lino Apes had defined him in the *Nuova Età*: when he touched the flame, the moth's wings vanished, the beetle remained.

Calumny and ingratitude! The fact of the matter was that he felt it his duty to remain frigid among all these youthful flames, for, if these were not fires of straw, he himself would be kindled by them in time; and if they were, he was acting in the common interest in quenching them.

Doubtless his personal appearance, at once sleek and unkempt, the pale, glassy eyes, that peered sharply through his spectacles, his beak of a nose, the sound of his voice, combined to give

people that impression of him, to arouse in everyone a repulsion all the more irritating, in that afterwards they were all bound to admit that events had almost invariably proved him to be in the right, to admit his vast and profound learning, the rectitude of his mind and conscience, the honesty of his intentions, and to respect and indeed admire his brutal and contemptuous frankness and the courage with which he challenged unpopularity.

For this hostile reception, meanwhile, Spiridione Covazza knew that he was indebted principally to three young Sicilians, who were surrounded at that moment by a fervent crowd of admirers: Bixio Bruno, Cataldo Scîàfani and Nicasio Ingrão, who had felt themselves to be especially injured by his criticism.

Each of them formed the centre of one of the three groups that had collected in the room. Bixio Bruno, tall and slim, with his bold olive-hued face and thick, curling, negroid hair, was explaining with fluent, highly coloured eloquence, curving his full, red lips in a faint smile of self-satisfaction, how in a short time he had succeeded in uniting in a single Fascio the six-and-twenty workmen's corporations, the discordant guilds, whose discarded banners now hung side by side in the hall as trophies of victory. He appeared to be full of confidence and sure of a triumph. People were expecting at any moment a reaction on the part of

the Government, dissolution of the Fasci, arrests, military occupation. But the good seed had been sown! Any suppression, any persecution would only enhance the greatness of the victory. How could anyone arrest three hundred thousand men? No. The leaders alone, a few dozen members, at the most; very well, the secret leaders had been appointed, their names still unknown to the police, and their propaganda would continue and be more effective than before.

Cataldo Scîafani, big and sturdy, with a beard like a quickset hedge, was discoursing to the second group, with prophetic inspiration; he was saying with smiling emphasis that down yonder, where the dayspring of national unity had first risen, it was fated that there should now break the redder, more fiery dawn of the deliverance of the oppressed. Yes, everyone knew, of course, that already in the Romagna, in the Modenese, in the Provinces of Reggio Emilia and Parma, in the Cremonese, the Mantuan country, the Polesine, Italian Socialism had emerged to fight its first battle; but it was a very different state of affairs to-day in Sicily! A revelation, astounding, prodigious!

Lino Apes, as he listened to him, was almost tugging out his moustaches by the roots, in his efforts to repress a smile. He, in his letters to Lando, called Cataldo Scîafani the Messiah of the Fasci.

In the third group Nicasio Ingrão, rough and stunted, with a black, warty birthmark covering half his face, was talking to the Deputies, putting such polish as he could on his native dialect, and alternating with strange gesticulations between the foulest imprecations and an innocent, childlike appeal; he was speaking of the crisis in the Sicilian sulphur industry, and of the appalling distress among the sulphur workers, who had now been locked out for some months.

One of the comrades, the head of the Fascio of Comitini, was trying to convey to the Deputies all that Ingrão, who owned land and houses at Aragona, had done and was doing for these sulphur workers, to prevent their being led on to acts of sabotage, incendiarism and bloodshed; but Ingrão flew at him and silenced him, threatening to flog him to the ground with his fist, if he said another word.

Celsina Pigna, from the corner to which she had withdrawn, burst out laughing at this comic display of violence, and Ingrão asked her, laughing himself as well:

“Shall I slay him, Signorina?”

In the three groups all the rest of the islanders, young men between twenty and thirty, as they listened to the words of these three leaders, men who were in the public eye, were swelling with pride, and almost moved to tears. They were confident, in their sincere youthful fatuity, that they

were playing a part without precedent in history, even there in Rome. They had seen, at the feet of these three leaders of the Central Committee, thousands of women, thousands of peasants, whole populations of islanders, delirious, throwing flowers, falling on their faces on the ground, weeping and shouting, as in the old days before the images of their Saints.

The whole party turned as one man and moved towards Lando Laurentano as he hurried into the room. With apologies for his lateness, he shook hands with those of his guests who reached him first, asked them all to take their seats, and, as soon as silence was restored, began:

"I have kept you waiting, gentlemen, for a reason which is perhaps not unconnected with our interests, with the interests especially of so many of our comrades who, more than any of us, in my opinion, need our help at this moment, down in Sicily."

"The sulphur workers!" cried Ingrão, springing to his feet, as though he himself were their natural protector. "I understand!" he added. "You mean that the engineer, Aurelio Costa, is here? I understand. Ah, he travelled up with me, that gentleman! We had a long talk, and..."

Lando raised his hand in an appeal for silence.

"The engineer Aurelio Costa, precisely," he went on, "manager of the sulphur pits of Salvo,

who, I understand, is one of the wealthiest mine-owners in the Province of Girgenti, has come to Rome to interest the Sicilian Deputies in a scheme . . .”

“Allow me!” Ingrão again interrupted. “Don’t let us waste time, gentlemen! Let me explain to you how matters stand. Signor Salvo is shortly to be connected, through a sister of his, with the Prince of Laurentano . . .”

A murmur of protest rose at Ingrão’s rudeness to Lando, to whom every eye now turned in apology for the discourtesy. But Lando, with a smile, hastened to interpose:

“Not with me, please! Not with me!”

Whereupon Ingrão, with an angry shrug, shouted:

“Holy Mother of God, what do you take me for? Didn’t I say the Prince? Would I call our revered friend, our beloved host and comrade, Prince? Not that it makes any difference, but he knows that it adds nothing to his dignity if we call him Prince, and he knows that we do not wish to degrade him by calling him simply Laurentano. I allude to the Prince his father; and Lando Laurentano cannot take offence at my words. If he does, he’s a silly idiot; I rise to speak, instead of him, because he lives in Rome, I live among the sulphur pits, and I know that the sole object of Signor Salvo’s scheme is to curry favour with the Prince’s son, by letting him see that he has the

welfare of the sulphur workers at heart. Stuff and nonsense! Dust in our eyes! Signor Salvo knows as well as I do that his scheme is all damned rot. Yes, gentlemen, I call a spade a spade. If he really wants to do something, let Signor Salvo clear out of the sulphur pits that he owns the so-called *botteghe*, the truck-shops where the workers are forced to provide themselves with the bare necessities of life, at a hundred per cent profit to him: wine, that is nothing but vinegar; bread, that is made of stones!"

Spiridione Covazza thereupon asked leave to speak, the whole company turning to face him with a hostile expression.

"Are you going to defend the truck-shops next?" Ingrão jeered.

Covazza did not turn a hair.

"I should like to know," he said quietly, "the general outlines of this scheme."

"I tell you it is all damned rot!" Ingrão again shouted.

Covazza held up his hand, still quite calm and composed.

"Really," he said, "shouting is not argument. I too have lived in the sulphur country; I have carefully studied the conditions of the industry, the complicated reasons for the crisis; and I can tell you frankly that if in present conditions the people who have least to hope for are the miners and carters, the prospects of the exploiters of the

pits and the landowners are no less dismal; and if this scheme . . .”

He was unable to proceed. All the representatives of the Fasci sprang to their feet protesting. Lando interposed, tried to calm them, urged them to respect one another's opinions and suggested that one of their number should be appointed forthwith to preside over the discussion.

“Bruno! Bruno! Bixio Bruno!” the cry rose from different parts of the room.

And Bixio Bruno, accustomed by this time to see himself chosen in this capacity, in two strides had reached the table that stood in readiness at the end of the room.

“Gentlemen,” he began. “We find ourselves, by indirect channels, carried into the heart of our discussion. The Hon. Covazza, in one of his recent articles . . .”

“Published abroad!” came a voice from the other end of the room.

“Abroad or in Italy, what does it matter!” retorted Bruno. “Our ideas, our party know nothing of national frontiers. In this article the Hon. Covazza has found fault with my work and with the work of my comrades.”

Spiridione Covazza, his arms folded on his breast, shook his head in dissent.

“No?” Bruno queried. “How do you mean? Didn't you say that our propaganda was all a tissue of moonshine?”

"I said," Covazza replied, rising to his feet, "that your honest definitions of a liberty that shall confer, really and fully, the right to satisfy the needs of life; the explanations that you give of class warfare, the spoiled versus the spoilers, and of the programme of the Marxist school in general, with the minor programme that you have framed for yourselves must turn, inevitably and most regrettably, to moonshine, owing to the ignorance of the people to whom they are addressed. So much I did say! And I went on . . ."

Confused sounds of protest again rose from the meeting. Bruno thumped the table with his fist to command silence.

"Let him speak!"

"I went on to say," Covazza repeated, "that you, blinded by the fervour of your sincere and youthful faith, imagine that your definitions and explanations are really understood."

"So they are! So they are!" his listeners shouted in chorus.

"They are not! They cannot be!" Covazza was emphatic in his denial. "How do you expect them to be, if you don't understand them properly yourselves?"

A storm of shouts broke out at this assertion. Bruno, Lando Laurentano, Lino Apes, the Deputies tried for a while to subdue it. Spiridione Covazza waited with bowed head and shut eyes until they should succeed; at one point he put his

hands together and, raising them to his face, bent his head lower still to hide his face in them, bowing his obese person with an effort; then spreading them out in a sweeping gesture and straightening himself again, he pleaded almost tearfully:

“Do not compel me, gentlemen, by any false regard for your misconceived self-esteem, do not compel me to modify one iota of the truth by concessions which would make you and myself alike blush for shame, and might at a time like this be pernicious! How many of you really know Marx? Four, five, not more! Be honest! None of the rest of you has any real knowledge of what is required; yes, yes, I assure you!—nor of the best means of securing it, being all of you infatuated by a sentimental Socialism, which wreathes its brows with magic promises of justice and equality. But do you know what the word justice means to the peasants and sulphur workers of Sicily? It means violence! Bloodshed, that’s what it means! Massacre! Because in legal justice, in the justice based upon right and reason they have never believed, seeing it invariably trampled underfoot to their hurt! I know them, a great deal better than you do, the peasants and sulphur workers of Sicily . . . yes, alas, a great deal better than you do! You deceive yourselves! You say to them: collectivism—they understand you to mean division of land, share and share alike! You say to them: abolition of wages—they inter-

pret it as: we are all masters now, out with your purses, count up the money, and share and share alike."

"It is not true! It is not true!" some of his listeners shouted.

"Allow me to finish!" Covazza exclaimed, momentarily out of breath. "The other illusion that you create for yourselves concerns the numbers enrolled in your Fasci: three thousand in one place, four thousand in another, eight hundred, a thousand, ten thousand. . . . Where, how do you count them? They are empty shadows, gentlemen, mere names and nothing more! Yes, I know from experience; as soon as the lists are opened, they flock in like sheep: one gives the lead, all the rest follow! But do you seriously propose to attach any importance, to base anything upon this, which is the fruit of an inevitable spiritual contagion? How many, once the first enthusiasm has cooled, remain active members of your Fasci? The majority of them drop out at the first call for the paltry weekly subscription! And how many Fasci that have arisen to-day will be dissolved to-morrow? Listen to a man who is not deceived, and who is not deceiving you, gentlemen! I know that you are met here to-day to decide whether or not you ought to support the tendency of the masses towards immediate action. I know that a number of you are opposed to the suggestion, and I think

them wise, and give them my vote. A serious movement, such as you have in mind, is not yet possible in Sicily! If you think that it has already begun, and by your doing, you deceive yourselves! To my mind it is nothing more than a passing fever, a delirium of unconsciousness!"

Spiridione Covazza sat down, mopping the sweat from his congested face, while ten, fifteen of his audience rose simultaneously to demand the floor of the house.

Cataldo Sclàfani spoke in a voice of thunder and apparently more in sorrow than in anger, since it was not the accusation itself that could offend him, but the thought that anyone was capable of accusing him, and with him his comrades.

"I rise, not to defend myself," he said, "but to explain!"

What was the strength of the Fasci? The heads of the more important of them were present, and each of them could inform the Hon. Covazza how his members were counted and how many there were. The Fasci, according to the latest statistics issued by the Central Committee, numbered one hundred and sixty-three firmly established, with thirty-five in course of formation. There did really exist, therefore, a great army of workers in Italy, in which one did not know whether most to admire the fervour, the intelligence or the discipline with which they acted upon a signal from

the Central Committee. The head of each Fascio passed the word of command to the various section leaders, and they in their turn to the heads of districts and streets; in the twinkling of an eye, by day or night, all the members of the Fasci could receive a message. And if to-morrow the workers were to rise, the whole population of Sicily would be swept as by a tide of fire. Because for years past the fire had been smouldering in Sicily, ever since she had been seen to be lying in the sea like a stone at which the boot of Italy was aiming a kick in return for all she had done for the so-called Unity and Independence of the country.

Why say that only in the last year had there been talk of Socialism in Sicily? Had there not been, as many as eighteen years ago, a section of the International there? And ever since then, party organs had continued to appear; and clubs, groups, centres had been formed here and there, so that, as soon as the idea of the Fasci first arose, there had been an immediate rallying and re-enlistment of old comrades in the faith.

It was not true therefore that the rapid formation of the Fasci was due solely to the persistent and vigorous propaganda carried on by the younger generation: the soil had long since been prepared; all that was lacking was unity, direction; and all that the young people had needed to do was to utter a call and point out the way, the

same way that the proletariat of other countries had been treading for years past. The peasants and workers of Sicily had rallied to the young men with outstretched arms, crying: "You, you are our true friends!" and were prepared to follow them with joy in their hearts, fully conscious of what was required of them.

And, in proof of this consciousness, Cataldo Scîafani referred, with emotion, to the speeches delivered at the last congress at Palermo by certain women from Piana dei Greci and Corleone; speeches which proved in the clearest manner that it was not the artificial light of an academic culture, nor any lecture-room theory that was required to arouse the said consciousness, but the daily experience of hardship and injustice, and the simplest and most spontaneous indication of the remedy for all these evils: unity!

Sentimental Socialism? But the creative force is nothing more nor less than sentiment, not cold reason, armed with doctrine! What mattered the abstract notion of a right, when there was the immediate and overpowering sentiment of a need? That a man should feel his own right with the same force with which he feels the pangs of hunger was worth a thousand times more than any precise theoretical demonstration of that right. Not to mention that this sentiment had now become a firm and clear consciousness, and displayed itself in every possible way. A true spirit of

brotherhood had diffused itself among the peasants and workers, whereby, in the frequent arrests of recent days, they had seen the comrades who remained at liberty supporting the prisoners and their families; when anyone was in distress, prompt succour from all the rest, and personal attention and loving care. Take for instance the nightly patrol by the decurions of the highways and taverns in town and country, in case the brethren be led to acts of violence, when heated with wine.

“These are your demagogues, Hon. Covazza!” Cataldo Selàfani exclaimed in conclusion, his eyes ablaze with excitement and with the emotion his own words aroused in him. “You should be ashamed of your accusations! There are here to-day, in Rome, two generations, face to face. Look at the spectacle that the old men present, and then look at us young men. To-morrow, from here, the Government, which protects all those who for years past have made of their love of their country, rolled up, and worn on the arm, a shield against the stones flung by a censorious populace, will send an armed force to Sicily to stifle by violence this great stirring of a new life which we young men have set in motion there! Hitherto the majority of the Central Committee, of which I am a member, have been opposed to immediate action. But the day will soon come, I foresee, when the impatience so long held in

check will break loose, and we leaders will not be able to control the people without immolating ourselves.”

Lando Laurentano, sitting beside Lino Apes, listened to Sclàfani's long speech with bowed head, pulling his beard with nervous fingers, and glancing to right and left of him in turn.

This meeting in his house reminded him of the dress rehearsal of a play. All these young men had their parts assigned to them, and he felt that, by dint of constant rehearsing, they had learned them by heart, and were repeating them with an artificial fervour. The vast chorus was lacking, being in Sicily. Oh yes, he spoke well, with a fine apostolic emphasis, that Cataldo Sclàfani; he deserved in some respects the deafening roars of applause, the praise of the chorus, had it been present. In love with his part, he would play it with perfect coherence even when facing the muskets of a firing party, on the barrack square; or, were he arrested, before his judges, in a court of justice.

Why was it that only he himself had not yet succeeded in finding a part to play? Why still, still within him, did the despairing cry of protest sound: “No, this is not it!”

What 'did all these comrades really want? Little enough, for the moment, in Sicily. They wanted, by the unity and resistance of the workers, to induce the landlords and mineowners to agree

to more humane terms, to abolish the starvation wage, usury, sweating, the burden of unfair municipal taxation, so that the workers should be assured not indeed of comfort, but at least of enough to provide for the primary necessities of life. They wanted, modestly adapting themselves to local conditions, to establish a co-operative system of production and consumption and to control the public services; after a few years, to triumph in the municipal and provincial elections of the Island; to head the poll in a few parliamentary divisions, so as to have preachers and prophets of the most crying needs of the poor in the municipal and provincial councils and in the Chamber of Deputies.

So much they wanted. And rightly. Admirable were the faith and constancy with which they were carrying on this task of protection and defence. What more did he want? There was nothing more to want or to do, for the time being. Why all this excitement, then, and all this ferment to secure what nobody, perhaps, outside the Island, would ever have imagined not to exist there already: that in every isolated little cottage in the fields the flickering oil lamp should no longer shew to the father, returning home spent with toil, the sleeping forms of his supperless children by a fireless hearth? That creatures should be put in the way of becoming and of feeling themselves to be men, whom a life of hardship had brought lower than

the beasts that perish? But a sound agrarian law, a moderate reform of the conditions of tenure, a slight increase in the meagre rate of wages, partnership (*mezzadria*) upon honest terms, such as obtained in Tuscany and Lombardy, such as he himself had granted on his own estate, would be sufficient to satisfy and appease those poor wretches without all this clamour of threats, without any need to assume these airs of apostle-prophets, paladins.

Honest and modest aspirations, controlled by a sort of evangelical discipline, to be attained by degrees, in course of time and with a clear consciousness of the right that was being withheld! Could he feed his mind upon these and not think of something more? No, no: this was not enough for him! Had it been enough, then, by thunder, he would give away all his fortune, and then, perhaps, as a poor man, would find in these aspirations food for his restless spirit. But as things were, no, they could not suffice him!

All of a sudden, as he turned to look at Lino Apes, he heard ringing in his ears, like a peal of sardonic laughter, the lines from Leopardi's *Hymn to Italy*:

To arms, to arms, and I alone
Will fight, and I will fall alone!

And he sprang to his feet at the applause which at that moment broke out from all parts of the

room to crown the eloquent speech of Cataldo Scîafani, nor could he help going forward with all the rest to clasp the orator's hand.

But Lino Apes, from his seat, with his Socratic smile on his lips and in his eyes, inquired in loud tones:

“Well, gentlemen, and what is our conclusion?”

The discussion appeared to be finished; the account settled; and everyone was feeling a sense of relief, as though rid of a heavy burden. At this challenge from Apes they looked one another in the face, surprised, pained, and drifted back quietly to their places.

“Nature, gentlemen,” Lino Apes went on, as soon as he saw them all seated, “nature, in its eternity, may fail to come to a conclusion, or rather it cannot and does not ever come to a conclusion. Man has to come to a conclusion, he must come to a conclusion; or at least must imagine that he has come to some conclusion; man! Well then, gentlemen, what is to be our conclusion? We are men, and we are met here for the purpose. But I can read the answer in your eyes. You have no desire for a conclusion, albeit you are not eternal! You have made a journey. Many among you will be continuing your journey, to Reggio Emilia. Here in Rome, those of you who are here for the first time have much to see; and time presses. Forgive me for speaking like this: you know that I see things on a minute scale, and I

speak as I see. I have little faith in the conclusions of men, all of whom, at a certain point, looking back upon the past, considering their works and their days, shake their heads sorrowfully and admit: 'Yes, we have grown rich,' or 'Yes, we have done this, that, or the other—but what conclusion have we reached in the end?' Nothing, strictly speaking, ever comes to a conclusion, because we are all part of eternal nature. But that does not alter the fact that we people here to-day, given the moment, ought to come to some sort of conclusion, if it be only illusory. I tell you that this is essential, because otherwise the workers from town and country, from the sulphur pits, will come here on their own account, without your enlightened guidance and your approval. And there will be a blind confusion, a savage tumult, when there might be an ordered movement, premeditated, sure. The consequences? Gentlemen, the man who is not born to act has to foresee them. Do you believe that we have cause for action? Let us consider the ways and means. The whole of Sicily is now ungarrisoned. Three or four companies of soldiers are stationed there to support the Offenbachian police, here to-day, gone to-morrow, wherever they may be needed. And against them, as you have said, an entire, compact army of workers. There is no need to arm them; we have only to disarm that handful of soldiers, and we remain masters of the field. No? You say

no? Wait! Let me speak . . . God in heaven, let me conclude!"

But he could not say another word. As with frogs squatting by the edge of a swamp, if one jumps in with a splash, all the rest, by twos and threes, diving in, make an ever increasing din; the audience, spellbound at first by Apes's clear reasoning, began finally, after a first interruption, to interrupt two or three at a time; and almost in an instant, what with supporters and critics, a violent dispute broke out in every part of the room.

At one end, Lando Laurentano almost implored them:

"Yes, that is right, there is something to be done, my friends . . ."

Elsewhere Bixio Bruno and Cataldo Scìafani were shouting:

"No! No! It would be madness! The idea! Ruination!"

And challenges, invective, suggestions rang for a while through the room. Some of the party, Covazza among them, left the meeting in disgust. At a certain point, one of them, quaking with terror, dashed, calling for silence and with upraised arms, into the group in which the dispute was raging most fiercely and exclaimed:

"Gentlemen, we are being watched!"

All eyes were turned to the two windows.

Beyond the garden railings a couple of men

were indeed watching, trying to hide behind the bushes. Celsina Pigna looked out of the window, and, as soon as she saw them, her face turned crimson.

"No!" she could not help breaking out. "I know them. . . . They are waiting for me."

Before her blushing smile and sparkling eyes the dispute subsided as though no one thought it possible to continue it, when this flower of girlhood, whose presence they had pretended not to notice, suddenly sprang up before them, as though to warn them: "I am here, stop it: there are people waiting for me!"

A little later, when everyone, except Lino Apes, had left the room, Celsina went up to Lando Laurentano and asked him, alluding to one of the two men who stood waiting for her beyond the railings:

"Don't you know him? He's your nephew. . . ."

"My nephew?" said Lando in amazement, having no idea that he possessed such a thing.

"Why, yes, Antonio Del Re," Celsina assured him. "The son of your cousin Anna, the sister of Signor Roberto Auriti."

"Ah!" Lando exclaimed. "And why doesn't he come in?"

Celsina noticed a sudden wave of emotion passing over Laurentano's face immediately after this question, and interpreted it in her own way, to wit that he, suspecting some intrigue between her and

his relative, had regretted the inopportune question, and made haste to reply:

“He is not one of us, you know! He is staying here in Rome with Signor Roberto. He is studying at the University. . . . But I am afraid . . .”

She broke off, seeing that Laurentano, absorbed in his own thoughts, was not listening to her; and at once went on:

“I bring you greetings from Lizio, the President of the Girgenti Fascio, and from my father. I, too, believe, if I may express my opinion, that it is not time to act. We have in the Fascio of Girgenti about eight hundred members enrolled. . . . But they are mere names: few of them attend, few of them pay . . .”

“Why, yes, of course . . .” broke in Lino Apes, a charming smile spreading over his hideous face, as though to convey to her that he had spoken as he did with the sole object of emptying the room. “Act? Why it would be madness! Are they joking?”

Celsina’s eyes darted flames. She could have slapped him. She smiled at him. She held out her hand to Lando Laurentano and said:

“Excuse me. I shall leave you to yourselves.”

Woodnotes wild.

The ex-tenor Olindo Passalacqua, honorary husband of the singing mistress Signora Lalla Passalacqua-Bonomè, not to mention reigning censor

of the *Privato Conservatorio Bonomè*, had been doing everything in his power for the last two hours to bridle the silent, raging impatience of Antonio. He kept on talking, muttering in an undertone, and every now and then, stealthily, if the sighing Antonio was looking the other way, would slip his wife's watch out of his pocket and begin: "Yes, poor fellow, you're right!" with a pantomimic gesture of eyes, brows and lips, and a moment later, with a fresh pantomime: "Here they are: let us follow them; come on!" And he went on talking, talking apparently to order; but in a special, highly comic and almost incomprehensible manner of his own, being all in fits and starts and sidelong references to weird, remote vicissitudes in his haphazard existence. And each digression was accompanied by a sudden alteration of face and voice, exclamations, grimaces, gestures of rage or joy or menace or commiseration or contempt, which left any stranger gaping speechless who, knowing nothing of these vicissitudes, had succeeded for any length of time in listening to him without laughing. Such displays of astonishment gave Olindo Passalacqua great satisfaction; they were to him a measure of the effect he produced; and with his hands spread open fanwise he pulled up, and up, and up, the long grey hair waved so as to conceal the bald patch on his crown, and then with his forefingers touched the waxed needlepoints of his dyed moustaches, either to put

the finishing touch to this habitual gesture or to make certain that they had not melted away in the heat of his discourse.

“A pittance, a mere pittance would be enough!” he was saying. “Listen, what does it amount to? What do two paltry lire a day amount to? And I would be content with less! A pittance. . . . The wretch! Think of all the money he flings away upon those rascals in there, who are staining his what do you call it, again? Oh, yes, his ancestral scutcheon! The swine! And my father-in-law, for the sake of Italy, letting the Carolino at Palermo go all to pot. . . . A gold mine! *Ione* by itself . . . poor Petrella! . . . My battle charger. . . . Everything there ruined . . . for these swine here! Do you hear how they’re squealing? And he a Prince, yes sir. . . . They ought to be ashamed of themselves. . . . What I say is, two lire a day for a deserving cause. . . . God in heaven, a fortune like that! All got without working. . . . And what do you know about it? Infernal contracts . . . lifelong slavery . . . I, myself, for ten years and more, a star and a slave. . . . Whereas here, he has only to say yes . . . I would undertake, Nino, I would undertake personally to produce her within a year in the first theatres in Italy. You know me; I may break, I don’t . . . I don’t . . . *frangar* . . . what is the expression? I could say it in Latin, damn it! My word . . . if I give my word! What else have I

left? My sole possession. We shall have to feed her a little bit better at first: that I admit! But if she comes off . . . if she comes off . . . oh, if she comes off. . . . And that bastard modern music . . .”

Olindo Passalacqua had discovered a portentous soprano voice in the throat of Celsino Pigna, immediately, the moment he heard her speak.

“And with her appearance, what more do you want? A furore, take my word for it: she’ll create a furore! My brother-in-law would be quite satisfied, out of consideration for Roberto and yourself, with a mere nothing, one lira fifty a day, even, for the cost of her board. Feed her well . . . and within a year . . . you don’t agree?”

Antonio Del Re shook with rage whenever any of Passalacqua’s remarks succeeded in forcing its way through the turmoil of conflicting thoughts to which he was a prey.

The day before, Celsina had suddenly called at Uncle Roberto’s house, during luncheon. Bewildered, stunned by the clamorous life of the great city, by the unfamiliar sights, by the novel and strange customs, he had been wholly unable to keep the promise he had made her before leaving home, namely to find at once an opening for her in Rome. He had written, nevertheless, to tell her that presently, as soon as he began to settle down, he would begin to look for one; with the private conviction, however, that not only would he not

be successful, but that he would have neither the will nor the means to try, caught as he felt, and must for some time continue to feel himself in a state of bewilderment which almost took his breath away and made everything round him appear vacillating and unreal.

This bewilderment, indeed, had not only persisted, it had steadily gone on growing, amid that precarious, eccentric, haphazard existence in his uncle's house. How on earth had his uncle ever trained himself to live like that, to arrange his life in a certain meticulous order of his own, in the midst of such disorder, to find a patch of soil in which to put down his roots?

He could place Olindo Passalacqua, Signora Lalla (Nanna, they called her) and her brother, Pilade Bonomè: gipsies; the first-named, sprung from heaven knew where; the other two, children of a theatrical manager, established before 1860 at Palermo, and swept away on the Liberal tide by the young gentlemen of the Palermitan aristocracy, assiduous frequenters of the wings of the Teatro Carolino. The theatrical venture having failed a few years later, penniless, "victims of the Revolution," as Olindo Passalacqua still described them (who, immediately after his marriage to the manager's daughter, had lost his voice); they had come to Rome, soon after '70, and had settled upon Uncle Roberto, on the strength of an introduction from a friend in Palermo.

Setting sail upon the dark sea of fate, dashing into the most preposterous adventures, making without a moment's thought the queerest decisions, were as simple to them as drinking a glass of water. Here to-day, gone to-morrow; to-day abundance, to-morrow starvation: it was enough for them every day to arrive at bedtime, somehow, without turning back in the face of every conceivable obstacle, of the hardest sacrifices, flinging overboard all that they held dearest and most sacred, if only they could lighten the ship, a ship without compass or anchor or rudder, buffeted by incessant waves in that perpetual storm which had been their life. Nevertheless there was this about them that was wonderful and pitiful and at the same time comic, that albeit they had jettisoned everything without any reserve, they had remained pure in heart, had retained a living innocence that throbbed with finer feelings, had remained affectionate, generous, always ready to spend themselves upon other people, to comfort, to succour, to glow with enthusiasm for every noble action. Anything that was improper, bad, shameful in their lives they perhaps sincerely believed was not to be imputed to them. A necessity to which one must turn a blind eye, or, if one eye was not sufficient, both. With what dignity, for instance, Olindo Passalacqua—after dining at Uncle Roberto's table, and reminding him not to forget to make Nanna take the drops for her weak

heart, or to have the centrepiece of fruit removed at once from the table, in case, if she were to touch, without thinking, the skin of one of the peaches, it might make her nose bleed, poor woman, as so often happened to her—would leave him in possession of his marriage-bed and, bidding his wife good night, wishing them all pleasant dreams, including the canaries and the blackbird in their cages, the parrot Cocò, on his perch; Titi, the consumptive monkey, on her chain; Ragnetta, the cat with her collar and tie; the two old dogs, Bobbi and Piccinì, both bedridden in the same basket, one blind, the other with his rump coated with tar; off he would go with his forefingers pressed to the points of his moustaches, stiffened already in the rigid severity of an unbending censor, to sleep in the private Conservatorio of his brother-in-law Bonomè in the Via dei Pontefici!

And what a crazy vessel was that table, at which four or five strangers sat down every day, invited on the spur of the moment, or coming in uninvited. Parliamentary friends of Uncle Roberto and Corrado Selmi, long haired music teachers, singers of either sex! The talk that went on there, passing often to such boisterous laughter and fun! And how sad to see Uncle Roberto there among them all, Uncle Roberto whom he, in the old days at home, had imagined as holding the same ideas, the same sentiments as his grandmother and mother (nor had he been mistaken,

for every day his uncle shewed him what he thought and felt by the most exquisite attentions, by a fatherly care of him), how sad to see him there among them all, joining in the talk, in the fun, and every now and then to surprise a look on his face, a pained smile, of mortification, if he caught his nephew's eye gazing at him with astonishment and grief!

What guidance could such an uncle give him? He might allow himself any licence, certain of meeting with neither prohibition nor reproof from him. He had matriculated in the Faculty of Science; but how was he to work in that house, which rang and gurgled and echoed from morning to night with trills and shakes and scales and exercises? Besides, the University, so far away, the crowds of giddy and thoughtless students, had inspired him from the first day with an insuperable aversion, gloom, discouragement, contempt, rage; and, taking any excuse that offered, he had not gone near the place again. He had imagined, and the thought at once became a certainty, that any one of those louts might take it into his head to make fun of him, so serious and different from themselves: and what would happen then? At the mere thought of it, his fingers became claws. The slightest incentive, at that stage, a spark, and his fury, which it cost him such an effort to repress, would have burst out in a terrific blaze. He had the impression that life was somehow

bottled up inside him, and was boiling over, fomented by remorse at his idleness and by his overpowering need to find some sort of outlet. But how was he to escape from that idleness, if he was now quite certain that he would never be able to do anything, since everything had become tangled and confused in his brain? And where was he to find an outlet. He had run about Rome from end to end, like a madman, hardly noticing anything, wrapped up in himself, in that brooding discontent with everyone and everything and everybody, in that continual boiling over of impetuous thoughts which, before they acquired precision, evaporated in his brain, leaving him empty and dazed, his features altered, distorted, his fists clenched, his nails driven into the palms of his hands.

At length, from the dull rage that was devouring him, from that gloomy, sour inertia, a murderous, monstrous idea had begun to germinate in his spirit, and had at once begun to batten voraciously upon all the rancour against life that he had gathered and brooded over from his infancy.

The idea had flashed across his mind as he listened one evening to a discussion at table of the pattern of the bombs smuggled into Sicily by Francesco Crispi during the preparations for the Revolution of 1860 and of how they were made. Corrado Selmi had said that he had made some

of them himself, by night, in the storehouse that Francesco Riso had leased in the convent of La Gancia. Proud of his knowledge of modern chemistry, he had burst out laughing, and had explained to them how childish the type in question was, and how nowadays one could secure a far more deadly effect with a mechanism of considerably less bulk.

“There, now!” Corrado Selmi had exclaimed. “Just to liven things up a little, you ought to throw one of these pretty little toys down from the gallery into the Chamber!”

All of a sudden he had felt himself gripped and completely dominated by the idea.

The shouts of indignation in the streets at the discovery of the fraudulent conduct of the banks, and the suspicion, growing into certainty, that Uncle Roberto too, with Selmi, was implicated in the scandal of these frauds, the news, more serious every day, that kept coming from Sicily, had made him decide to seek out the ways and means of putting this idea into practice as soon as possible. So much of life, now, was finished for him! If Uncle Giulio, who had set off hotfoot for Girgenti, did not succeed in obtaining the money from grandmother’s brother, Uncle Roberto would be arrested; and then the crash, the abyss. . . . Ah, but first of all! Yes, yes, that would be the proper revenge, the outlet for all the bitterness that had poisoned his own life and the lives of

his relatives; and he would show his companions down in Sicily, the chatter-boxes, that he was able to do single-handed what all of them put together could never have done.

And then, just at that moment, Celsina had turned up in Rome. When he saw her standing before him with a fiery face, laughing to conceal her embarrassment, a fierce anger had swept over him. He had the feeling now that nothing more could happen, nothing move from its place unless propelled by him; that people ought to remain at their posts, motionless; as though held in suspense and waiting for the great and terrible act that he was to accomplish. Whence, how had Celsina come, when he had done nothing to make her come? Lando's money . . . of course! That money he had refused to Uncle Roberto. . . . The *Fascio* of Girgenti. . . . What a pantomime! And how furious he had been to see Celsina receive so cordial a welcome from those Passalacqua, to whom it was the most natural thing in the world that a girl should come by herself to Rome, upon such a pretext, and should call at the house in search of her lover, firmly resolved to return no more to Sicily. He had turned all the colours of the rainbow when he saw them all staring at him with eyes that sparkled with a malicious tolerance, which seemed to say to him in so many words: "Why, what harm is there? We understand! Don't be ashamed!" And Uncle Roberto too had remained in the room, with his

familiar wistful smile, beneath which he tried to conceal the annoyance that any novelty caused him: annoyance only. To him too there was nothing wrong in a girl's coming to call upon his nephew in his house, at a time like this, with the gulf yawning at their feet, into which they might all be plunged at any moment. To these Passalacqua the gulf was nothing: one of the many difficulties of life that had to be surmounted; and for surmounting it, they trusted blindly in Corrado Selmi. Quite sufficient, moreover, to set their minds at rest was the calm that Uncle Roberto forced himself to preserve in order not to agitate his Nanna, with her weak heart.

Enough of that "Signor Antonio" and that third person feminine, in which Celsina had begun by addressing him! Whom did she suppose she was taking in? Let them call one another "tu"! Oh, my dear child. . . . Yes, that's right, laugh. . . . If she didn't laugh from her heart at her age, and with those eyes and that sweet little face. . . . Oh, what a voice! Did you hear? . . . Clear as a bell. Had she never had her voice tested? Had she never sung, never even hummed a tune, like this? Never at all? But she must be tested, at once. . . . Impossible that there shouldn't be a voice there, with those inflexions, with those modulations. . . . Come along, quick, any old song would do, in the sitting-room, quick. . . . She'd drawn a lucky number! No better expedient could be imagined for not going back to

Sicily! The means to study? Why, wasn't there Signora Lalla, and the *Privato Conservatorio Bonomè*. Lessons free, music and piano free: only a trifling charge for her board. And Olindo Passalacqua, on learning that Celsina was one of Lando Laurentano's comrades in the Socialist faith, had at once suggested her applying to him for this allowance. No? Why not? A deserving cause! A plague on those scruples, that modesty, which restrain the conscience from doing good! She could always offer to repay the allowance to Lando out of her first earnings, but no, my friends, that is how sharpers, and money-lenders behave, all the more reason why a gentleman should refrain from following their example. . . . The mean stupidity of it all!

Antonio had writhed in his chair as he listened to this talk. He longed to seize Celsina by the arm and to shout in her face: "Off with you, back to the place you came from. These people are mad, dancing over the abyss. Go! Go! It is I that am going to open the abyss! Nothing exists any longer; I myself no longer exist: all is finished!"

And yet, here he was, he had, with Passalacqua, escorted Celsina to the door of Lando's house, and was now waiting for the meeting to break up, and for her to reappear from the house. Celsina had promised him, privately, that she would not breathe a word to Laurentano of that ridiculous

allowance; she would merely ask him to interest himself in her in some way, to enable her, by using his wide influence, to find some modest employment in Rome.

The allowance Celsina had privately intended to demand for him, for Antonio, instead. He had confided to her, the evening before, the terrible position in which his uncle found himself placed.

“And you?” she had asked him.

His sole reply to this question had been a furious gesture, of desperation. The suspicion had crossed her mind that he was meditating some act of violence, but against himself; and she had tried to rouse him, to give him fresh courage. She had come to Rome, her spirit ablaze with dreams and hopes, full of self-confidence, eager and prepared to overcome every obstacle. And so there would be two of them henceforward, to share and face those obstacles; she would sweep him along in her ardour. Was it possible that he, with his family connexions, could perish? And was there not still his other uncle? Why, of course! The difficulties would lie in her path. But there, she laughed at them!

She came out of the villino, in a towering rage.

“Nothing! The idiots. . . . Come away! Come away!” she said, thrusting her companions forward.

“Didn’t you say anything?” asked Passalacqua, in wondering dismay.

“Say anything!” Celsina shook. “They are a lot of madmen, halfwits, idiots, imbeciles. . . . Chatter, chatter, chatter, speeches, or silly tittle-tattle that tries to appear clever. . . . Come along, come along! But I have scored one point at least, I am here, in Rome! Nino, for goodness’ sake, Nino, don’t look like that! Go away . . . yes, yes . . . it is just as well, go away! Go away!”

Olindo Passalacqua hurried after Antonio who, swelling with rage, his hair standing on end, had lengthened his pace; he caught hold of him, beckoned to Celsina to join them at once, with mute appeals for calm and prudence. But Celsina, smiling as she stole softly up behind them, shook her head, as much as to bid him let Antonio go.

“But this is madness, really . . . calm yourselves, children! You’ll only blind yourselves . . . and the remedy? How can you ever see the remedy, if you blind yourselves with rage? There is always a remedy, my friends; for everything there is a remedy; more or less hard, more or less bitter, more or less radical . . . but there is one! There is no need to be frightened. . . . First of all, what, you say, this? Not this! Never this! Then . . . oh, my friends, don’t I know! It’s another matter altogether! . . . And yet, and yet, and yet. . . . I mean to say, let us be quite clear about it, always respecting the laws of . . . of . . . of good. . . . Let us be gentlemen! You

know, Nino, I may break but I do not . . . I do not . . .”

“What are you doing? What do you want? What are you hanging about like that for?” Celsina asked Nino, who was still breathing heavily, with a murderous expression on his face. “Stop it! You’re wasting your breath! I feel so calm and contented! Come along, which way do we go, Signor Olindo? You, now . . . look at me . . . no, no, look me fairly and squarely in the face . . . here, look in my eyes. . . . Before you left home, do you remember?”

Nino contracted his face in a tremendous spasm of rage, and sobbed through his nose, clapping his fist to his mouth.

“Come, that will do for the present! Let us go!” Celsina went on. “You, Signor Olindo, must tell me one thing only, but you must tell me the truth, on your conscience: Have I a voice?”

Olindo Passalacqua drew back a pace, his hands clasped to his breast:

“But I have sung with Pasta, do you know that? With Lucca I have sung; I have sung with the sisters Brambilla . . .”

“All right, all right,” Celsina cut him short. “Then you are certain that I have a voice?”

“A voice of gold!” exclaimed Passalacqua. “Gold, pure gold, I tell you! And in less than a year you . . .”

“All right,” Celsina again interrupted him.

“And now listen, one more favour! Finding the money you mentioned will be my affair. I am quite capable of marching into every shop I pass, into all the hotels, offices, banks, cafés, and asking them if they need a cashier, saleswoman, interpreter, anything in the world! I have a diploma in book-keeping, with honours; I speak two languages, English and French. . . . But I would even go out as a dressmaker, a seamstress. I have never had a needle in my hand; I can learn. . . . Schoolmistress, companion, governess. . . . Just leave it to me! You can go home now. Leave me alone with this fine specimen! Good-bye.”

And, taking Antonio by the arm, she made off.

“Take me to see Rome!”

See Rome, indeed! She could see nothing, with her brain in a ferment. She talked and talked, and her eyes sparkled and blazed beneath her little hat with its bold feather; her burning lips quivered, and she laughed without a trace of malevolence at all the people who turned round to stare at her.

After a while: “Listen, Nino,” she murmured in his ear. “Take me right away . . . to some lonely spot . . . far away . . . I must sing! . . . I want to hear how I sing. . . . If it should be true! Do you believe it? Ah, if it should be true, Nino dear! Come along, come along. . . . Is it far to the Tiber? Take me to see the Tiber, and I can sing there.”

She continued to prattle all the way. She told him that of course, before she became a famous soprano or contralto, she simply must find a husband, to get rid of her ugly surname which distressed her so.

“Celsina is all right; but Pigna! Think of it! Impossible! Let us see now, suppose we try. . . . Celsina . . . what? Celsina Del Re? Oh, good gracious! My political views. . . . Del Re—the King’s? I am a Socialist! Impossible, Nino! I can never be your wife, fate is against it! But anyhow, you don’t want me. . . . Oh, oh, don’t. You’ll make my arm black and blue. . . . You do want me? Then it shall be Celsina Del Re, and we needn’t say another word on the subject! Celsina of His Majesty . . . silly, isn’t it . . . of His Majesty Antonio I.”

They arrived, just as the sun was setting, at a spot outside the fortifications, close to the Polygon, on the right bank of the Tiber. Monte Mario reared its cypress crest against the purple, vaporous sky, and the vast plain on one side, which serves as a training ground for the garrison, and on the other the grassy banks of the river, seemed, in the twilight suffused with violet and gold, like a painted canvas. In the awestruck silence, they could hear not so much the sound as the motion of the turgid stream, of a dead green, tinted here and there with roseate reflexions of the sky, stained here and there by some black flotsam.

“Beautiful!” sighed Celsina, looking round her, with the feeling that it was all a dream. “How beautiful it is here. . . .”

Then, turning to Antonio, who had sat down on a stone and was gazing at the ground, stooping, his hands pressed tightly between his thighs:

“Nino, what are you doing?” she asked him. “You don’t see, you don’t hear anything? Lift up your head, look, listen . . . this silence here . . . the river . . . and over there Rome . . . and I am here with you!”

She went up to him, laid her hand on his shoulder, stooped down to gaze in his face, and:

“You are not twenty yet!” she said to him. “And I am eighteen. . . .”

Antonio shook himself free, crossly, at which she, piqued, shrugged one shoulder and moved away.

A moment later, from some way off, the sound of her singing reached Antonio:

The birds make love while leaves are on the trees. . . .

Her voice welled up in the silence, limpid and fervid, like the light of the first star in the evening sky. And while she, from where she stood, went on singing:

Each calls his mate and waits for her to answer. . . .
The time has come to build our nests anew. . . .

he, where he sat, in desperation, clenching his fists

in the frenzy of his jealousy, was seeing her attired as an actress, in a vast theatre, in the glare of the footlights, in the arms of a tenor. . . . He rose, shuddering, and went to find her.

“Come away! Come away! Come away!”

“What do you think of it?” she asked him, with a charming smile of happiness.

Antonio gripped her arm, and, glaring at her with a look of hatred:

“You will be ruined!” he growled at her between his set teeth.

Celsina broke into a laugh.

“I?” she said. “But if you don’t want me, it is the people who come near me that will be ruined, my dear boy! I have wings . . . wings. . . . I shall fly!”

CHAPTER III

Solemn spectacles.

THE Hon. Ignazio Capolino was beside himself with joy. Thousands of workmen, in his constituency, driven wild by famine owing to the closing of Salvo's sulphur pits, were threatening violence and pillage, fire and bloodshed; Aurelio Costa, who had exposed himself to their wrath by the promises he had made in Salvo's name, was writhing with indignation at the sprightly chatter of H.E. the Under Secretary of State for Agriculture; he, meanwhile, was bursting with pride at the undreamed-of affability, the confidential manner, as of an old friend, with which the said Under-Excellency had received him.

When he secured this audience for Costa he had been afraid that his far-famed influence, his boasted personal friendship with the members of the Government would, when put to the test, suffer the most painful mortification; instead of which. . . . Why, yes, of course, mad as March hares, quite so! enemies of all law and order, those sulphur workers! a criminal gang, to be sure! stirred up by a handful of impostors who deserved hanging! Extreme measures? The utmost rigour of

the law? Why certainly! Of course! That was all that was required. . . . A stern eye, to be sure! a strong hand! Humanity . . . why, of course . . . so far as was possible. . . . Yes, yes, my dear Sir . . . but why not? Precisely!"

And he appeared, with ill concealed timidity, to be stretching out his hand to pat the Under Secretary of State on the back or on the knee, as a dog, after crawling on the ground to flatter the master whose severity it fears, ventures to raise a paw to see whether it has appeased him.

As for that scheme for the compulsory co-operation of all the producers of sulphur in Sicily, worked out by his friend the engineer whom he had the honour of introducing . . . oh, a most remarkable man, and so modest, formerly in government service as a mining engineer, yes, and a graduate of the *École des Mines* in Paris—as for his scheme, well, if His Excellency the Minister would only condescend to run his eye over it. . . . No? Impossible, was it? Not the right moment . . . quite! quite! that was just what he had remarked, himself! . . . this was not the right moment! Adding fresh fuel to the fire, quite so! something more was required . . . why, of course! Excellent! Oh, my dear Sir . . . why not? Precisely!

He came out of the Ministry swelling like a turkey-cock, radiant. Aurelio Costa, to escape from the temptation to hit him, to spit in his face,

silent, pale, quivering, lengthened his pace and let the other drop behind.

“Ingegnere!”

Costa, without looking round, replied with an angry wave of his hand.

“Ingegnere!” Capolino called to him as he overtook him, frowning fiercely. “I say, are you mad? What more did you want?”

“Leave me alone! For heaven’s sake, leave me alone!” replied Aurelio Costa, seething with rage. “I am off to the telegraph office. Don Flaminio must come here himself! I am going straight home to-morrow.”

“Calm yourself, man! Think what you’re saying,” Capolino went on, his tone a blend of arrogance and derision. “What more did you want of an Under Secretary of State? What did you expect? That he would throw his arms round your neck? He couldn’t have been better. I myself never dreamed of such a reception. . . .”

“I dare say!” sneered Costa. “If you . . .”

“If I what?” Capolino promptly retorted. “You wanted vague promises, did you? Moonshine? He treated me, he talked to me, like a true friend! And remember that I am an Opposition Deputy; that I was opposed by the Government, tooth and nail, at the election. As you know quite well!”

“I know nothing!” Costa groaned: “All that I know is: I had orders, definite orders, that the

scheme must be taken into consideration at once by the Government. And you never said a word; you did nothing but agree. . . ."

Capolino interrupted him, looking him up and down as he spoke.

"Am I talking to a man or to a child? Where have you been living? Can you seriously believe that, at a time like this, in the thick of all this pandemonium, people can find time to examine your scheme? Orders, indeed! When? Wait one moment! When did you receive these orders from Flaminio Salvo? Before you started, wasn't it? But now, excuse me . . . look at this!"

And Capolino with a furious gesture of disdain pulled out from the bundle of papers under his arm the formal announcement of the ceremonial marriage of H.E. Prince Don Ippolito Laurentano with Donna Adelaide Salvo.

"You must have had one too!" he said. "So just keep your mouth shut, and don't think any more about orders or schemes!"

"Oh, then it's all a game, is it?" exclaimed Aurelio Costa. "With the lives of other people at stake?"

"Lives!" Capolino shrugged his shoulders.

"With my life! Mine!" Costa repeated, ablaze with anger and scorn. "With my life! I shall have to go back there, to Aragona, among the sulphur workers! And do you know the state I shall find them in, after being locked out for seven

months? They'll be a pack of hyaenas! But why then did he make me promise everybody . . . up here even, up here, just now, to Nicasio Ingrão, to the Prince's son? And all the plans I have drafted?"

"My dear Ingegnere, forgive my saying so," said Capolino soothingly, half shutting his eyes, keeping back a smile, "you have been working all these years with Salvo, and have not yet discovered that he is not merely a business man but a politician as well. Now politics, don't you know—one has to live in a political atmosphere to understand—politics, my dear Sir, what are they chiefly? A game of promises, that is all! And you, allow me to tell you, are dashing headlong into it at this moment. . . ."

"I?" Aurelio Costa burst out, clapping both hands to his breast. "I, headlong into it?"

"Why, yes, of course," Capolino was emphatic. "Blindfold, let me say! And I'm not referring only to this business, of the scheme. You don't see anything, you don't understand . . . there are so many things you don't understand! Listen to me, Ingegnere: don't have anything more to do with it! If you go back to your post. . . . I am grieved, believe me, sincerely grieved to see a man like yourself, whom I esteem so highly, cut a figure that is . . . not a pretty one, not at all a pretty one. . . ."

This speech left Aurelio Costa at first open-

mouthed, with amazement; then his face flushed crimson and he lowered his eyes for a moment; finally, unable to repress his impulse of annoyance:

“To me,” he stammered, “you say these things to me? To me? . . . Why, I . . . When did I ever. . . . Into what did I ever dash headlong, of my own accord? I have always been dragged in, by the hair of my head, and I’m sick of it, d’you hear? Sick of these schemes and intrigues and moods and scandals. . . .”

“It is scandals now, is it?” put in Capolino.

“Yes, Sir, scandals!” Aurelio went on, casting restraint to the winds. “Scandals up here, and down there . . . and if you don’t see them, I do! It is too much! I never wanted anything! I never aspired to anything, let me tell you, except to live in peace with my own conscience, and to lead a quiet life, doing the things I know how to do. And I have had enough! Let him come here himself, now, and see, after all the promises he has made, that he makes a proper settlement, for down there, I repeat, I must return, and I have no wish to lose my life at the game. Good day to you, Sir.”

Ignazio Capolino followed him for some distance with his eyes; then turned up his nose in derision and stood shaking his head.

If he had only known that the true reason for which Aurelio Costa wished Flaminio Salvo to

come to Rome, was precisely that for which he wished him not to come: his wife!

The heat with which he defended the scheme, which had indeed been worked out with all the scrupulous care that he put into everything he did, and his annoyance at seeing it scrapped, tossed aside without a moment's consideration and almost in derision, were generated actually by the heat of another passion, by his annoyance at another rebuff, which he, in order not to mortify his self-esteem in his own eyes, declined to admit. Sent away from Girgenti by Salvo on the pretext of this scheme, just at the moment when Salvo's daughter knew that Nicoletta Capolino was in Rome with her husband, he had hastened there like a thirsty man to a spring. He had expected to find Nicoletta as he had last seen her at Colimbètra, full of flattery for himself, ardent and provoking. Instead of which . . . it was only by a miracle that she had not burst out laughing when she read in his profound gaze the memory of that unforgettable evening!

Capolino, who had so much fault to find with his wife's conduct at this time, might have noticed it; but ever since, at Colimbètra, still swathed in bandages after his wound, he had felt the need of a pair of spectacles, he had been unable to see anything with his former clearness of vision, either in himself or round about him.

The trick played on him by that bullet, projected with unexpected force from Verònica's pistol, had profoundly disturbed his conception of life. Until that moment, he had supposed that it was he who played tricks upon other people, tricks that had always come off; now, all of a sudden, he had discovered that, in spite of every precaution, against all anticipation, laughing at every artifice and protection, fate, in its blindness, can and does play tricks also, inspiring intentions in other people. And Capolino had become extremely solemn.

Already, quite suddenly, whether from violent emotion or from loss of blood, his sight had weakened. The Prince, Don Ippolito, had been graciously pleased to present him with spectacles, a fine pair of solemn spectacles, with stems, rims and bridge of tortoiseshell. And life, as seen through these spectacles, and through the eyes of a Deputy, had given him a strange, unexpected impression: his hands, everything round him, his wife, his past, his future, presented themselves to his gaze in new shapes, lights and colours, in looking at which he had found himself almost compelled to assume at once a sort of frown, half grave, half frigid, which had made his wife, when she first saw it, burst out laughing:

"Oh, my poor Gnazio!"

There again, he simply could not see the last of this wife of his: his wife who kept looking for

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his eyes behind his new spectacles, and could not be persuaded to take him seriously.

Having come to Rome with him for a fortnight or three weeks, for a month at the most, Lellè had stayed on there for more than three months, and shewed not the slightest intention of returning home. Could she be out of her senses? Lellè was exultant. At last she was in her element. With the Vella family, relatives of Flaminio Salvo, and connected also with her husband through his first wife, she had at once made herself completely at home. Francesco Vella went in for display, Donna Rosa Vella was much the same as her younger sister Donna Adelaide, always exclaiming and giggling, and as for their son and daughter, Ciccino and Lillina, had Nicoletta gone and ordered them to a pattern, she could not have found them more to her liking. What a darling Lillina was! Still unmarried, running to seed in her attractive, spicy plainness, she was the inseparable companion of her brother Ciccino: sharper, more daring, more vivacious than he, she helped him, defended him, led him, apart from all their more intimate secrets. Brother and sister had never thought of anything but giving themselves a good time; and Nicoletta, in their company, had in a few days become a perfect horsewoman; she had already ridden to hounds three times; not to mention theatres, parties, excursions: a perfect paradise! Lillina

always knew exactly when to invent a slight headache or some other trifling malady, so as to leave Ciccino and their new friend Lellè alone together.

Now Capolino, large as Rome was, as a Deputy and looking through those solemn spectacles, saw himself a by no means unimportant figure, and was afraid lest his wife's unrestrained behaviour should make him conspicuous. Anyhow, he could not allow it, not so much because of what other people might think, as for his own sake. As a Deputy and with his spectacles, he wished his wife, too, to be more serious in future. In Rome and with those Vella hanging round her, and with the freedom he was obliged to allow her, it did not seem to him possible. Flaminio Salvo, now that Donna Adelaide had got married, would certainly be needing her at Girgenti. For his daughter, that was to say; for that dear motherless Dianella. If not to-day, to-morrow a letter would come from him begging her to return. The Hon. Ignazio Capolino longed for that letter to arrive! And now this imbecile Costa had come, to smash all the eggs in his basket!

His life. . . . He was afraid of risking his life. Great donkey! But of course, if he had not had sufficient intelligence in all these years even to notice that Dianella was in love with him, that he had a fortune within his reach, and such a fortune too!—how could he have realized just now that an Opposition Deputy could not have been

more cordially received by an Under Secretary of State? And he had dared to find fault with him for his approval. . . . Why, of course, to satisfy him one ought to stand up for the sulphur workers, just as though, in the last election, it was their votes that had carried him to the head of the poll! Placed between the Government and the Socialists, could a Conservative Deputy, a member of the Opposition, hesitate in his choice? But what was the use of trying to reason about such matters with a man to whom fortune gave bread because it knew that he had no teeth to chew it with?

Meanwhile Flaminio Salvo, hoping on the one hand to carry on the farce of his scheme and on the other to get into touch with Lando Laurentano, who had refused to attend his father's wedding, would doubtless hasten to obey the summons; and would be certain to bring with him Dianella, who could not be left alone at Girgenti. And Dianella would perhaps remain for a while in Rome, with her uncle and aunt, to amuse herself and—one never knew! Flaminio Salvo's eyes looked far ahead—Lando Laurentano called now and then at the Vella's, and . . . one never knew!

If Dianella remained in Rome, good-bye to any thought of Lellè's returning to Sicily.

So thinking, Capolino heaved a sigh, and his solemn spectacles with their stems, rims and bridge of tortoiseshell, grew misty.

Good-night, dear!

Before a week had passed, Flaminio Salvo was in Rome with Dianella, as Capolino had anticipated.

Dianella arrived there more dead than alive; Flaminio Salvo, as usual, sure of himself, with that cold smile on his lips, to which the slow gaze of his eyes from between their heavy lids gave an expression of faint irony.

They were to stay with the Vella family, who, with Capolino, his wife and Costa, went to meet them at the station. Donna Rosa, Ciccino and Lillina had never seen Dianella.

“Why, my child, what have you been living on? Lizards?” her Aunt Rosa began by asking her, at the sight of her waxen cheeks and pained, bewildered eyes. “But I know what it is, my dear, with a stupid man like your father in the house, you can never get what you want. Oh, I tell him straight out what I think, you know. I’m not like your Aunt Adelaide, who always gives way in everything. I am older than he is, and he’s got to respect me.”

“I kiss your hand, now as always,” said Don Flaminio, with a bow.

“To be sure you do! Here it is: kiss it, kiss it!” replied Donna Rosa, holding out her plump little hand. “Of course you’ve got to kiss it! You just stay a while with us here in Rome, child, and

you shall see that I shall send you back to Sicily as fine and fat and frolicsome as a lady abbess. D'you see this lady?" she added, with a glance at Nicoletta Capolino. "What do you think of her? Nothing much to look at, one must admit; but now that Ciccino and Lillino have made her take riding exercise, d'you see her eye? It has come to life! Put yourself in your cousins' hands, my dear. Come along, now, come along! Laugh, laugh. . . . It's a great joke, life, I can tell you."

In the house, Don Flaminio told a marvellous tale to his sister and brother-in-law, nephew and niece, and their friends, of the marriage ceremony of the Prince and Donna Adelaide, celebrated by Monsignor Montoro in the chapel of Colimbètra, before the finest flower of Agrigentine society. H.R.H. the Count of Caserta had been graciously pleased to send an autograph letter of good wishes and congratulations to the happy couple.

"And who may he be?" asked Donna Rosa, looking all round the room; then, tapping her forehead: "Oh, of course, yes; I remember: Cecco Bomba. . . . I have a Bourbon brother-in-law, with soldiers. . . . Adelaide wrote and told me! How on earth could this poor child here be happy with a whole tribe of Royal Highnesses writing autograph letters about her aunt's wedding? Go on, man, go on! . . . Oh, if I had been there! You and your Prince of Laurentano. . . ."

Continuing his narrative, Don Flaminio pro-

fessed himself particularly gratified by the presence of Don Cosmo, the bridegroom's brother, at the illustrious gathering, and by the valuable present sent by Lando to his step-mother.

"I've seen it!" said Ciccino.

"We helped him to choose it!" added Lillina.

"Ah, so you know him quite well, then?" Don Flaminio asked in a tone of satisfaction.

And he plied his nephew and niece with questions, to find out how intimate they were with the young Prince, what he looked like and what sort of person he was, calling his daughter to listen, with loud exclamations of amazement and delight at the answers they gave him.

But Dianella's face shewed such evident consternation and her eyes so strange a bewilderment that he suddenly changed his tone and manner altogether, and pretended to be surprised, because the gravity of recent events in Sicily, in which the young Prince must, by all accounts, be more than a little implicated, did not appear to him to go with the gay humour which his nephew and niece described. And he started to relate, with an expression of grave consternation on his features, all that had been happening of late in Sicily, at Serradifalco, Catenanuova, Alcamo, Casale Floresta, which proved that throughout the Island a great fire was smouldering, which would presently blaze out, and compared Sicily to a huge pile of timber, of trees that had died from want of mois-

ture and for years past had been mercilessly felled, now that the rain of benefits was entirely confined to Northern Italy, and never a drop fell on the parched soil of the Island. Now the young folk had amused themselves by kindling beneath the pile the wisps of straw of their socialistic preachings, and behold, the old logs were beginning to catch fire. They were for the present little noisy flares, a crackling here and there; there shot forth now at one point, now at another, a threatening tongue of flame; but these had already condensed in the air into a suffocating smoke. And the worst of it was this: that the Government, instead of hastening to throw water, sent soldiers down to raise another kind of fire with the fire of their rifles. But if at least they had had enough soldiers to face the onslaught of the enraged populace! The scattered garrisons, stupidly incited to fire upon the unarmed crowds, found themselves at once compelled to barricade themselves in their barracks; and then the mob, maddened by slaughter, remained in command of the field and furiously assailed the municipal offices and set fire to them. Terror meanwhile was spreading through the island; mayors and prefects and chief constables were losing their heads; and where was it all going to end?

This he said for the special benefit of his brother-in-law Francesco Vella, Capolino and Aurelio Costa; he reserved for the ladies an account

of a recent act of prowess performed by five hundred women in a village in the interior of Sicily, named Milocca. On the specious charge that a heap of manure had been spread, not outside but on the actual property of a landowner who had declined to agree to the new system of tenure introduced by the peasants of the Fascio, the public authorities had unjustly arrested, and committed for trial on a charge of criminal conspiracy the President and the four members of council of the Fascio itself. Whereupon the women of the village, to the number of five hundred, indignant at this injustice and tyranny, had burst upon the barracks of the carabinieri like so many furies, broken in the door and carried off the five men under arrest; then, wild with joy at the liberation of the prisoners, had borne in triumph, shoulder-high, through the streets of the village, one of the carabinieri and the weapons they had torn from their hands.

Donna Rosa, Nicoletta Capolino and Lillina loudly applauded the victory of these gallant women; but Don Flaminio held up his hands and cried:

“Gently, gently! Wait a moment! The rejoicing was brief. . . . The Milocchesi, I mean the men, who had not been in any way concerned in this revolt of their womenfolk, hearing that the Prefect of the Province was sending a reinforcement of troops and police and magistrates to Mi-

locca, mounted their mules and, armed with shot-guns, took to the fields. They are still scattered about the countryside, determined to sell their freedom dear. But the worthy magistrates, at Milocca, have arrested thirty-two women, including some who are expectant mothers, and others with infants at the breast, and have marched them off in handcuffs to the prison of Mussomeli."

"Brave men! Brave men!" Donna Rosa exclaimed. "But how in the world? And you, Gnazio, a Sicilian deputy, haven't raised your voice in Parliament, even to denounce the arrest of pregnant women and nursing mothers?"

Don Flaminio smiled and, stroking his moustaches, said:

"It wouldn't suit his book. They are Socialist wives and mothers. He is a Conservative. Although down there, you know, Don Ippolito Laurentano would like the Clerical Party to support the proletariat movement and make capital out of it, coming to some secret agreement with the leaders. But Monsignor Montoro, you will be glad to hear, is against this; perhaps because Canon Pompeo Agrò has been for the last month at Comitini carrying on propaganda, I don't know how far on Gospel principles, against myself, among the sulphur workers. However. We shall see a coolness between father and son. To-morrow I shall leave a card upon the young Socialist Prince."

Capolino accompanied Flaminio Salvo on this visit to the villino on Via Sommacampagna, and on his return. The strange impression, almost amounting to terror, that the sight of Dianella, on her arrival, had made upon him, was strengthened by what Salvo said to him on the way.

It was one of his usual winding discourses, full of hints and veiled allusions, from which Capolino thought that he could make out this: that he was in truth greatly worried not by the political state of Sicily but by the state of his daughter's mind, which gave him all the more food for thought inasmuch as her mother was insane; that he intended therefore to meet her wishes, if this visit to Rome did not produce the effect that he promised himself from it; to meet her wishes also, because, now that his sister had left his house, he, no longer having anyone to leave with his daughter, who needed attention, affectionate companionship, distraction, would be obliged to sacrifice too much of his working time, and could not (here Capolino felt he was expected to note a severe rebuke of his wife, who had dared to leave Donna Adelaide alone as well, on the occasion of her marriage); to meet her wishes, lastly, and at the same time bestow upon Aurelio Costa (who presently, in two or three days, would be returning to Sicily) a fitting reward, if he succeeded in bringing the sulphur workers to their right minds.

These quite obvious deductions from Salvo's

long, hinting speech, cost Capolino so intense an effort that one of the glasses of his spectacles, which were continually being clouded by his breath, broke between his nervous fingers, under the strain of polishing. Fortunately the fragments of glass only tore his handkerchief, without cutting his fingers. But that evening he would have to speak to his wife, and to speak seriously, without spectacles.

Nicoletta knew that the unexpected arrival in Rome of Flaminio Salvo and Dianella was due to Costa; more perspicacious than her husband, she had at once foreseen that their coming would mark the end of her life of pleasure, and she was accordingly so inflamed with hatred of the responsible party that she would have killed him without hesitation, had she been able to do so with impunity. Already she had seen the first result of their coming: Ciccino and Lillina had gone off on a tour of Rome with their pale, mystified cousin, leaving her out of their plans from the first morning.

So it was an ill-chosen moment for a serious talk!

"I am to go, am I?" she at once asked, to cut the discussion short. "I can go to-morrow, if you like. Without any talk about it. But not alone, no!"

"With whom?" put in Capolino. "I . . ."

"You have the destiny of Italy on your hands,

I know!" exclaimed Nicoletta. "How could the Chamber sit to-morrow, if you weren't there?"

"I beg of you," said Capolino, with a movement of his hands which signified restraint, prudence, on the one hand, and on the other that he disdained to roll the ball of conversation down a slope that was easy, however slippery. "I am here to do my duty!"

"So am I!" Nicoletta promptly retorted. "You don't agree? You, as a Deputy, I as a wife. The Mayor said when he married us: the wife must follow her husband. Oh, my dear man, if you're going to fly into a rage about it! . . . Leave your duties out of it; don't make me laugh! I've told you before: you, my dear, seem to have lost your sense of proportion! Let us talk as we used to, or rather, let us understand one another as we used to, without talking at all, for your good and mine. Bear in mind, Gnazio, you may be bored, but I am bored to death, and capable of . . . oh, I don't know, capable at this moment of doing the maddest things. I warn you!"

"God in heaven, but why?" Capolino groaned, clasping his hands together.

"Why?" shouted Nicoletta, advancing upon him, ablaze with anger and scorn. "You ask me why? You tell me to go, to return home, and you ask me why?"

"Please, please . . ." Capolino tried to interrupt her, and thrust his hands forward, as though

to arrest her onslaught physically as well. "In our . . . in your own interest, surely! If you won't allow me to speak . . ."

"But what do you want to say! Let well alone!" exclaimed Nicoletta.

"I know what I have to say, don't worry," Capolino went on with intense gravity, lowering his eyes. "You don't know what Flaminio told me this morning. I have said nothing to you, up to the present, about your protracted stay in Rome? Nothing. . . . And you were blaming yourself for not having gone down to look after Donna Adelaide on her wedding day. Now, do you know what has been the effect of your absence from Girgenti? Simply this: Flaminio Salvo, left alone and overburdened, has decided to meet his daughter's wishes at last."

Nicoletta was taken aback by this news.

"Indeed?" she said; and bit her lip, a blind glare of hatred in her eyes.

"Do you understand?" Capolino went on. "He is afraid of her brain going, like her mother's. And it seems to me that his fear is not unfounded. Did you see her? She's a pitiful . . ."

"Sickening! Disgusting!" broke from Nicoletta. "She ought to be ashamed of herself!"

"Love!" sighed Capolino, raising his shoulders, half shutting his eyes. "And Flaminio thinks perhaps also that, with the shadow of her mother's insanity, a suitable match for her daughter

may not be easily found. Besides, he has put Costa in a most embarrassing position with the sulphur workers there, and is thinking of rewarding his devotion, his abnegation. . . .”

“How thoughtful! . . . How sweet!” said Nicoletta. “And I am to go and wallow in it, am I, like a bee gathering honey?”

“You? Why?” asked Capolino.

“And who looks after his daughter, if it is not I?” Nicoletta inveighed. “Will it not fall to me to keep my eye on the loving couple? To watch their caresses, listen to their talk? To store in my bosom the confidences of the timid dove, restored to health and reason?”

Capolino shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say: “After all, why not?”

“Oh no, my dear!” his wife went on emphatically. “It would not matter in the least to me, if—in my own interest, as you say—I did not see myself obliged to play this part. . . . And you forget another thing! That this engineering gentleman once asked for my hand, and that I refused him, because I did not think him good enough for me! A fine revenge, now, for him, to become engaged before my eyes to Flaminio Salvo’s daughter!”

“But such an encounter with you, who have already refused him,” Capolino pointed out, “will be embarrassing for Flaminio Salvo’s daughter, if anyone. . . .”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Nicoletta, rising to her feet. “Because I am now the wife of the Honourable Deputy Ignazio Capolino!”

“Which is a great deal better, I would have you know!” cried he, thumping the table with his fist, and rising to his feet also, proudly.

Nicoletta measured him, calmly, from head to foot; then said:

“Oh, as far as merit goes, I should never dare to question it! Still . . . still, I am to go, that is all, purely in my own interest, as you say. . . . What would you have? Merit, my dear, is not always rewarded. . . .”

“It infuriates me too,” said Capolino, “that a fool, an idiot of that sort should rise like that, hoisted up by a lucky accident, shoved along like a stubborn animal in harness. . . . Because he, you know (he told me so himself), has no ambition whatsoever. . . . That is the beauty of it! He observes nothing, understands nothing, and fortune helps him on! In a day or two, he’ll be Flaminio Salvo’s son-in-law!”

“Ah, no!” Nicoletta broke out. . . . “That marriage shall not happen! I give you my word: *it shall not happen!*”

Capolino again shrugged his shoulders and screwed up his eyes:

“If Flaminio wishes it . . . how are you going to stop it?”

“How?” replied Nicoletta. “How . . . I don’t

know how! But at all costs . . . oh, at all costs! You may be quite sure of that!"

Capolino insisted:

"But really, do you suppose that Costa is capable of feeling revengeful, like that, for your refusal of him? No, I assure you! He is not capable even of that! I have studied him; with you he is respectful, obsequious . . . in fact, he is quite tongue-tied in your presence. . . . It will never occur to him! And if you . . . if you can manage to overcome your dislike of him, and to treat him . . . I mean to say, treat him with a sort of . . . polite indifference . . ."

Under the gaze of Nicoletta's eyes, which were fixed upon him with a cold and calm contempt, the smile that had accompanied these last words faded from his lips.

"As, for that matter, you have always treated him," he added with dignity. Then, changing the subject: "Oh, I was going to suggest that we might go out. . . . We might dine somewhere. . . . Does that appeal to you?"

On their return home late at night, Nicoletta, as she got into bed, asked her husband:

"Hasn't Ingegnere Costa to go back to Sicily in a day or two?"

"Yes," replied Capolino. "Flaminio told me so this morning."

"And you might tell Flaminio," Nicoletta went on, curling up under the blankets, "that I too am

ready to go; but not by myself. Since the engineer is going . . .”

“Why, of course!” exclaimed Capolino. “Excellent! You might travel down together. . . .”

“Good-night, dear!”

“Good-night.”

To-morrow, for ever.

Being firmly convinced that fate had always been against him, from the day of his birth, Flaminio Salvo believed that it was only by steadfastly maintaining an ever alert and unshakable resolution, and by opposing with actions which he himself considered harsh all those people who had made or were making themselves the blind instruments of fate that he had been able, up to the present, to defeat it.

But the aversion of fate, powerless to injure him, had turned with ferocity against his family, his wife, his son: now also, with that unconquerable passion, against his daughter. In these calamities he felt that there really was something akin to a vile and cruel revenge; and this feeling not only set him free from any remorse for all the harm that he knew himself to have done, it even made him ashamed of certain momentary weaknesses, and seemed almost to make it easy for him to do further harm, whether to be avenged upon fate in his turn or to save himself from being crushed by it.

He never for a moment let himself entertain the suspicion that there might after all be nothing wrong in his daughter's passion for Aurelio Costa. It was to him unquestionably wrong; and not on account of any difference in birth or social position (all moonshine!) but because it had its origin in a weakness of his own, in the gratitude he had shewn for all these years to his young rescuer. Out of good nothing could come to him but harm. This was an article of his belief. And no philosopher could have persuaded him to recognize that his reasoning, founded upon a prejudice, was at fault. Logic? What was logic compared with the experience of a lifetime? Besides, if, in a single instance, he was persuaded to recognize the flaw in his reasoning, what excuse had he left for all the harm that he had deliberately done in so many other instances?

Whenever a business deal, a transaction of any sort, seemed from the outset to be turning to his advantage, he, instead of rejoicing, would grow despondent, would at once suspect a trap set for him by fate and would prepare to defend himself.

He was none too well pleased, therefore, either by the information brought him and the suggestion made by Capolino, to wit, that Nicoletta was ready to start the next day, and that she would like to travel down with Costa; or by the message delivered by Ciccino and Lillina, that Lando Laurentano, who had been going about all that morn-

ing with Dianella and themselves, would look in that evening to see him. They had met him by accident, and although he had begun by telling them that he was greatly annoyed by something that had appeared in one of the morning papers, he had afterwards grown quite merry in their company and had been most grateful for the distraction it afforded.

Flaminio Salvo was in Francesco Vella's study, and was giving Aurelio Costa his final instructions with regard to his return to Sicily, which was fixed for the morning following, when his nephew and niece brought him this message, bursting noisily into the room and bringing Dianella with them. He at once noticed a very different change in Dianella's face from her usual expression on catching sight of Aurelio, and seemed almost stunned for a moment when, after her cousins had spoken of Laurentano's gracious affability to them, she, in a ringing voice that did not sound like her own, and with an air almost of defiance, corroborated them:

"Yes, most polite! Really most polite!"

"I am glad . . ." he replied coldly, looking at her over his spectacles. "But, if you don't mind, I am engaged just now. . . ."

And he glanced at Costa, as much as to say: "I have something far more important to think about at the moment. . . ."

This was true, as it happened. It was a ques-

tion of exposing to the risk of death this worthy young man, in entire ignorance of the part he was cast to play; it was a question of flinging him as a prey to the fury of an entire populace, famished and disillusioned.

Salvo's soul was at that moment the scene of a strange play of conscious fictions. His pleasure at this announcement must be transformed into displeasure, his hopes into misgivings; and therefore, not only must he not build upon the fortunate accident of their meeting with Laurentano, or upon the good impression which his daughter appeared to have formed of him, he must actually regard it as a positive misfortune, coming at a moment when he, simply in order to meet his daughter's wishes, was giving this good young fellow Costa a glimpse of his reward for the highly perilous undertaking into which he was flinging him. And he continued in this conscious self-deception, fired with anger at his daughter, who, after compelling him to yield so far, came into the room now to let him know, with a quite novel expression on her face, that the young Prince of Laurentano had by no means failed to attract her!

Nor did the play of fictions in Salvo's soul stop there. He pretended that he did not yet understand his daughter's strange expression, which he had understood perfectly from the first; he was positive, in fact, that Dianella, in paying that

tribute to Laurentano in Aurelio's hearing, had intended to avenge herself on the latter, and was now certain to be in her own room, crying and tormenting herself in secret. His feigned annoyance at the prize which he was to dangle before Costa's eyes was therefore a genuine annoyance after all; so much so that, in order not to feel any remorse at this anguish he was causing to his daughter, he went on pretending to believe in earnest that really, yes, really, if Costa should be successful in bringing the sulphur workers in Sicily to their right minds, he would give him Dianella as a reward. In the meantime, he was sending him off next day, with Nicoletta Capolino.

That evening, he made himself polite, but with a certain amount of reserve, to Lando Laurentano, who received a warm welcome from the Vella family, especially from Ciccino and Lillina.

Dianella was as white as a sheet, and kept going by continuous spasmodic efforts, which pained and alarmed her relatives. Her gentle eyes now glowed with strange piercing sparks, now darkened as though in a confused terror, now faded into a clouded opacity. Nicoletta Capolino, invited to dine by the Vella on this last evening, had let her know that she would be leaving Rome with Costa in the morning; and now, there she was, speaking, without any coy affectations, but with her habitual vivacious ease, to the young Prince of Laurentano of the exquisite courtesy shewn to

her by Don Ippolito, down at Colimbètra, on the unfortunate occasion of her husband's duel.

Her husband himself appeared, a moment later, in the richly furnished drawing-room, with the engineer Aurelio Costa, who had come to say good-bye to the Vella family.

This was for Dianella and Nicoletta a moment of agonizing suspense.

Just as the Honourable Ignazio Capolino appeared composed and grave and troubled in those funereal tortoiseshell spectacles, so Aurelio Costa appeared light-headed, excited, dazzled. Plainly visible on his face was the profound emotion which the news of his immediate departure with Nicoletta had aroused in him. He no longer felt the ground under his feet; he was incapable of articulating a single word.

On seeing him enter the room, Nicoletta felt a sense of alarm: she could tell, without looking at him, that he was searching for her with his eyes, without a thought for anyone else. She breathed again, when, a moment later, she heard him engaged in animated discussion with Laurentano of the Fascist movement in Sicily.

All his consternation had vanished, vanished all consideration for the starving sulphur workers at Aragona, vanished his disgust at the destruction of his plan for compulsory co-operation: he would now have gone out, cudgel in hand, to face all those rebels down there.

Flaminio Salvo, with a prudent regard for Laurentano's presence, recalled him with a smile to milder language.

"So that they may set fire to the sulphur?" Costa asked him, in a white heat of rage. "I know them, the brutes! Never let them see you're afraid of them! You need a big stick to bring them to reason! Leave it to me. . . . Deserted by everyone, without even the satisfaction of seeing my plan considered worthy of a glance, I shall go down there, alone . . . and we shall meet face to face. . . ."

In his excitement he did not perceive the astonishment with which this bellicose utterance was received; nor was he at all put out when at length he became aware that no one was paying any attention to him; he allowed Capolino to lead him out upon the wide balcony outside the room, while Flaminio Salvo, Francesco Vella and Lando Laurentano went on talking quietly among themselves, and Ciccino promised Nicoletta that he would come down to Girgenti soon to pay her a visit, and Donna Rosa and Lillina showered advice on Dianella, that she should do this, that and the other, if she wished to recover her health and spirits quickly. Called by Salvo, Capolino returned to the room a moment later, and Aurelio Costa was left alone upon the balcony.

How long did he remain there? He gazed at the stars, gazed, as in a dream, at the gleam of

the moonlight reflected from the distant windows opposite, across the piazza; gripped by a maddening, sweet desire; without any idea of where he happened to be; with a single image before his eyes, hers who now, in another moment, would surely be coming out in quest of him, to say to him: "To-morrow! For ever!"—"To-morrow, for ever," he repeated, clenching his fists, his eyes closed in voluptuous longing.

He had spoken to her already that morning. They had come to an understanding. Everything, she would leave everything, to follow him! Yes, even down there, amid the peril, from which he could not at that moment draw back. Anyhow, he was obliged to go back there; his home was there, and his work, which he would now place at the disposal of other employers, forsaking Salvo. What did that matter? What was the reward that she had mentioned to him? A great reward, which he would forfeit if he parted from Salvo. . . . What did it matter? What reward could be greater than the happiness that she would bring him, by loving him?

So Aurelio raved to himself on the balcony, as he waited, repeating from time to time, with ecstasy: "To-morrow! For ever!"

In the drawing-room, meanwhile, Ignazio Capolino was speaking in a tone of distress of the hubbub with which the publication of a criminal charge in one of the morning papers had filled the

lobbies of the Chamber all that day. It was a matter of the forty thousand lire for which appeared as debtor to the Banca Romana Roberto Auriti, "notoriously the cloak," said the paper, "for a well-known Southern Deputy, who until quite recently, was in the good graces, if not actually of the Government, of several of its members." And the paper went on to speak of the documents that had been abstracted, in order to save this Southern Deputy. But, in the heat of excitement, at the last moment, a certain letter had been overlooked and had fallen into the hands of the judicial authorities, a letter signed by Auriti himself, now anxiously in search of those forty thousand lire, to save himself and his friend.

Capolino said that several Deputies of the Extreme Left were going to raise the question in the Chamber, and foretold the imminent arrest of Auriti.

Lando Laurentano was on tenterhooks. All that afternoon he had been trying to discover from what source the information had reached the paper. It appeared to have been brought by somebody who had been listening at the door of the room in which Giulio Auriti was imploring his help; and he was afraid that Giulio might now suspect him of being responsible for the betrayal.

Salvo, Vella and Capolino, noticing the young Prince's emotion, began to commiserate Roberto

Auriti, as an innocent victim, and Salvo let it be clearly understood that he would be quite willing to advance the money to save him; but Capolino said that it was now too late. There was nothing to be done except to take a cup of tea, which Lillina had made.

The first two cups, carried by Ciccino, had gone to Donna Rosa and Dianella. Nicoletta now handed a third to Lando Laurentano.

“Milk?”

“Yes, please. A little.”

And Dianella, as she sipped hers, waited for Nicoletta to go out on the balcony with the last cup for Aurelio. But Nicoletta, seeing that she was being watched, pretended at first to have forgotten about him, and kept the cup for herself.

“Oh, what about my escort?” she then exclaimed, as though suddenly remembering his existence.

And she went out on the balcony.

As soon as Aurelio saw her appear, he drew back instinctively as far as he could into the darkness, to make her follow him. But she stood with one foot on the sill, and, holding out the cup to him, said quietly, stiffly:

“Come in, for goodness’ sake: you are attracting attention. Don’t be so childish.”

“Only tell me . . .” he implored.

“Yes, I will tell you one thing: and get it firmly

fixed in your mind," she added quickly, "that I have done everything to prevent your ruin and mine. Don't accuse me, to-morrow; because it has been your doing. That is all!"

And she returned to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IV

Va' fuori d'Italia . . .

CORRADO SELMI came out of the Chamber of Deputies livid, contorted, a convulsive tremor running through his whole body.

As soon as he reached the sunlight of the piazza, he made a desperate effort to recover himself, to seize within himself and restore to his own control the life that was ebbing from him in a tremendous turmoil; but abandoned the attempt, discovering that he had not even the strength to draw breath, as though his lungs, his stomach had been drawn and quartered.

A new feeling then arose in him suddenly: fear. Fear, not of other people, but of himself.

A moment ago he had challenged and assailed the others, there, in the Hall of Parliament, with extreme violence. It still made him tremble all over. No one, in there, had dared to breathe. But that silence . . . ah, that silence had been worse for him than any invective, than any tumultuous rising of the entire assembly.

That silence had overwhelmed him.

He still heard ringing in his ears the sound of his footsteps as he walked out of the hall. In the

formidable silence, those footsteps had sounded like hammer-blows upon a coffin.

He felt a burning thirst; and a numbness in his legs, as though . . . as though they had been amputated.

Crushed by the accusation, he had attempted to rise again with all the impetus of the vital energies that were still potent in him; and had killed himself. There could be no doubt that the assembly, immediately upon his leaving the hall, had voted the necessary authority for proceedings to be taken against him.

And yet everybody knew that he was a poor man; knew that the money taken from the banks could not burden his conscience with shame or remorse, as in so many other cases.

After he had so often stared death in the face, at an age when to every man life is most dear, had he not earned the right to live? In the stupid complication of all those shady proceedings, the simplicity of this right seemed almost childish, and such that everyone must laughingly deny it to him.

Dead; not only that, but they wished him to die disgraced! He must die, then, and he might have been a hero to all these living men, who flung in his face now, as a crime, his having lived

But it was not so much the accusation, after all, that seemed to him unjust, as his accusers; and, more than unjust, ungrateful and vile: vile be-

cause, after having for all these years understood that he had the right to live, they now rose to prove to him, scoffing, the childishness of his claim; after having for all these years understood his need, they now rose to fling it in his face as a reproach.

Nor would they stop at that! Next, the trial, conviction, prison.

Corrado Selmi laughed, and again remarked the effort that it cost him to relax the murderous expression on his face in that horrible laugh. The frank, light smile, that had always accompanied all the activities of his life, even the most serious and hazardous, was it transformed into this melancholy grimace, hard and bitter? Once again he felt afraid of himself: afraid of acquiring a precise consciousness of something obscure and horrible that had suddenly crept into his innermost being and was plunging him in confusion, giving him that impression of having been drawn and quartered, irremediably.

And, to recover as best he might his material solidity, to overcome his repulsion and horror at this impression, he looked round about him, as though imploring support and comfort from the familiar aspect of things. They too seemed to him changed and somehow evanescent. He felt, with terror, that it was no longer possible for him to re-establish a relation of any sort between himself and the things around him. Yes, he might

look; but what did he see? He might speak; but what was he to say? He might move, but where was he to go?

He spoke, simply to hear the sound of his own voice; and it too seemed to him to have altered. He said:

“What am I doing?”

He knew very well what remained for him to do. But, as he squeezed from his palate with his tongue the double c of the word *faccio*, he was conscious of nothing but the dryness of his tongue and the bitter taste in his mouth; and stood there with a frown of disgust on his face.

“No,” he went on. “First of all . . . what else?”

Anything else appeared to him futile, vain.

He could only, for a little while longer, to relieve his feelings and thus find some outlet, some way of escape from himself, say and do foolish things. Think seriously, act seriously he could not, save at the cost of yielding to the obscure, violent purpose which threatened to destroy all the elements of life within him. He could amuse himself with the fragments of that life, which, from the internal tumult, kept springing to the surface of his shattered consciousness: amuse himself for a little. . . . Yes, at Roberto Auriti's! He must see him, tell him that for his sake, to shield him, he had voluntarily surrendered to the charge. Yes, he still had somewhere to go.

He hailed a cab, so that the trembling weakness of his limbs might pass unnoticed, and gave the driver the address: Via delle Colonnelle.

As soon as he was seated, he changed his mind, anticipating, in return for all that he had done, a violent scene. But no: at all costs he would manage to prevent that. His action appeared to him more than dutiful, positively generous to Roberto Auriti. And, at that moment, he could feel nothing but anger at his own generosity. He had stripped himself of all his prestige, of every privilege, to share the fate of a defeated wretch, who had not known how to make use of his talents, his deserts, to make a position for himself, to force himself, as he might have done, upon the consideration of his fellows. Roberto Auriti could inspire no pity, only anger and contempt. Even if he, steering blindly, had flung his friend with himself among these breakers, that castaway did not, surely, deserve that Corrado Selmi, when he had almost reached the shore, should dash back into the sea to perish with him: he did not deserve it, because he had never known how to live, that fellow, how to surmount even the most trifling obstacles: he was already in his own eyes a drowning man, to whom again and again Selmi had thrown a rope to help him to swim to the shore. When, once and once only, Selmi had tried to help him, why, by the very hand that he held out to him, he had dragged him down after him into the

gulf, 'down, 'down, obliging him to abandon any chance of being rescued by other people. And that brother of his who had dashed off to Sicily to save them both: yes indeed! they must all wait in patience until he came back with the money! At his leisure! Without hurrying! And after he had disclosed everything to Lando Laurentano. The idiot! Yes, for this reason alone, he might have refrained from exposing himself to shield an incompetent. But now . . .

On reaching the Via delle Colonnelle, as he climbed the dark stair, he ran into Olindo Passalacqua, who was hurrying down four steps at a time.

"Ah! The very man, Onorevole! I was coming to look for you. . . . Tell me, what has happened? What is in the air?"

"Wind," replied Corrado Selmi, placidly.

Olindo Passalacqua stood rooted to the ground.

"Wind? What do you mean? That infamous accusation? But how? Who was it? I should like to spit in his face! To go and create an Italy for swine like that!"

Corrado Selmi took the other's chin between his fingers:

"Bravo, Olindo! *Nobili sensi, invero. . . .* Come along upstairs!"

"Wait, Onorevole," Passalacqua pleaded, holding him back. "I must warn you! My Nanna

knows nothing about it. We didn't know about it ourselves. Quite by chance, my brother-in-law Pilade happened to pick up a newspaper of the day before yesterday . . . opened it and saw . . . sent it up to us, marked. . . . Roberto was watering the flowers on the terrace . . . he read it, it fairly knocked him down. . . . But can you believe it? A man, a man in his position, not to read the paper, at a time like this! He's like that bird, don't you know . . . what do they call it? . . . that buries its head in the sand. . . . And I take in three, if you please, every day: three papers! If he read one even! The moment he opens it he begins to nod; and then he says that he has read all three of them and can never sleep a wink!"

"The ostrich," said Corrado Selmi. "Allow me!"

And he raised his hands to Olindo Passalacqua's throat to put straight the flowing red necktie, knotted in a butterfly bow.

"The ostrich," he repeated. "That bird you mentioned. . . . Now you're all right!"

Again Olindo Passalacqua stared at him open-mouthed.

"Thank you," he said. "But then . . . is there no need for us to worry, then?"

Corrado Selmi gazed into his eyes, earnestly; laid his hands upon his shoulders, and:

"Aren't you a censor?" he asked him.

"Censor . . . yes," Passalacqua replied, with an air of perplexity, as though he were not quite sure of the fact.

"Very well, then, let the sky fall!" exclaimed Selmi with a gesture of contemptuous indifference. "Censor, put it in your pipe and smoke it. Come along, upstairs, now, with me."

They found Roberto prostrate in an armchair, his face turned to the ceiling, his arms drooping, the watering can by his side. As soon as he saw Selmi, he started to his feet and, sobbing convulsively, flung himself upon his breast.

"For pity's sake! For pity's sake!" Olindo Passalacqua entreated him, hastening to shut the door, and signalling to him with his hands not to make a noise, that Nanna would hear him in the other room.

Through the shut door, the sobbing of Roberto on Corrado Selmi's breast was answered by the caterwauling voice of a singing pupil.

Corrado Selmi, tottering under the weight of Roberto, stood for a while watching the signals of Passalacqua, who continued to implore pity on the delicate heart of his poor wife, pity on the ruined Roberto, pity on the household, which would be turned upside down; finally, his shoulders began to shake with an insane laugh:

"Give it here!" he said, seizing the watering can and dashing out upon the terrace. "Why are we all so solemn? You were watering, weren't

you? Let us go on watering! Here . . . here . . . so! Like this! Rain, Olindo! Rain! Rain!"

And a regular torrent of rain came showering from the rose of the watering can upon Olindo Passalacqua, who tried to escape by the terrace, screaming and shielding his head with his hands, followed by Selmi roaring with laughter, saying:

"I take the water, thou takest the water, he takes the water, we all take the water!"¹

"Oh Lord! For pity's sake . . . no, my dear Sir . . . nooo . . . what are you doing? . . . Stop, for pity's sake . . . it's no joke, I tell you! Stop! Oooh! Stop! . . ."

His cries brought Nanna, her singing pupil, Antonio Del Re and Celsina upon the scene.

At once Corrado Selmi, breathless, ran to shake hands with Signora Lalla, who laughed as she looked at her husband shaking himself like a drenched chicken. The two girls laughed also.

"What, my dear Nanna," cried Selmi, "is the most useful of plants? The *riso*!"² Let us cultivate the *riso*! Let us water Olindo, who makes us laugh!"

"But I'm not laughing, I'm crying . . ." groaned Passalacqua.

"Precisely; because you're crying, you make us laugh!" retorted Selmi.

¹ A play upon the name Passalacqua. C.K.S.M.

² *Riso* in Italian means both *rice* and *laughter*. C.K.S.M.

"Laughter often ends . . ." muttered Antonio Del Re, clenching his fists.

"In tears, you mean?" Selmi completed the saw. "Bravo, young man! Always serious! All the silly things you do will always be firm and solid, with sharp claws and plenty of snout. We do ours . . . here, censor, dancing, dancing. . . . Come, Nanna, into the other room, to the piano! You play and we dance! Roberto shall put his trousers on back to front, with the tail of his shirt sticking out; he shall take his toy sword and his wooden horse, the ones he played at soldiers with, in Sixty; we shall make him a paper helmet, and he can career round the room, gee-up, gee-up, while Olindo and I dance to the tune of Garibaldi's hymn. . . .

Va' fuori d'Italia . . . va' fuori d'Italia

Va' fuori d'Italia . . . va' fuori, o stranier!"

He was still singing the refrain when there appeared in the doorway of the terrace, with tears of joy in his eyes, radiating blissful emotion, Mauro Mortara with his medals on his breast and his knapsack on his back.

As soon as he saw him, Corrado Selmi, with a horrified gesture, dashed through the other window that opened on the terrace, shouting:

"Ah, perdio, no! This is too much!"

Roberto Auriti ran after him to stop him:

"Corrado! Corrado!"

Mauro Mortara, at this sudden flight, stood in bewilderment facing the stupefaction of Signora Lalla, Passalacqua and the singing pupil, the smiling wonder of Celsina and the scowling wonder of Antonio Del Re.

"I have come, no offence meant," he said, "to say good-bye to Don Roberto. I am leaving to-morrow."

"And who may you be?" Signora Lalla inquired, as though she saw before her a denizen of the moon, rained down from the sky.

"I am . . ." Mauro Mortara was beginning to explain; but he broke off abruptly on catching sight of Antonio Del Re. "Aren't you Donna Caterina's grandson?"

As he uttered her name he raised his hat.

"Do you tell them," he went on, "who I am. I have been here twice before; they would not allow me upstairs, because Don Roberto was not at home."

Passalacqua, dripping from head to foot, went up to him, began fingering the medals on his breast and inquired:

"A Sicilian Patriot? The Sicilian Patriots, perdio, deserve statues of gold! Sta . . . stat . . . statues . . ."

A sneeze, slow in exploding, kept him for a while open-mouthed, with quivering nostrils and hands held out as though to ward it off; finally it exploded, and:

"Of gold!" Passalacqua repeated. "Curse that Selmi, he has made me catch cold! But why has he run away? He must be mad! Just look how he . . . has . . . but where has he gone?"

He was interrupted by a scream of "Roberto!" from Signora Lalla as she dashed from the terrace into the room through which Selmi had just made his escape.

They all crowded into the room after her, in terror.

A stranger, with his hat in his hand and his eyes lowered, was standing rigid upon the threshold of the room, while Roberto, his chalky face mottled in patches, looked round the room, staggered, unable to make up his mind. At her cry, he put out his hands, but as though to check the outburst of his own emotion rather than anyone's else.

"Please, please," he said, "no fuss. . . . It's nothing. . . . A . . . a summons from the police. . . ."

"They're arresting him!" Antonio Del Re hissed through his set teeth, his face changing as he trembled all over.

Nanna gave a shriek, and fell in hysterics in her husband's arms.

"They're arresting him?" asked Mauro Mortara, stepping forward, while Roberto looked about the room for the clothes he would require, signalling to them all not to shout, not to make a fuss.

"How is this?" Mauro went on, gazing at Antonio Del Re.

Receiving no answer from anyone, he went up to the stranger and, with upraised arm, apostrophised him:

"You! You have come here to arrest Don Roberto Auriti?"

"Mauro!" the last-named interrupted him. "For pity's sake, Mauro . . . don't interfere!"

"But how?" repeated Mauro Mortara, turning to Roberto. "They are arresting you? Why?"

Roberto hastened to lend a hand to Passalacqua, the singing pupil and Celsina, who were unable to support Signora Lalla, who struggled and twisted amid screams, sobs, groans and hysterical laughter.

"Into the other room, for goodness' sake; take her out of here!" he appealed to them.

But it was not possible. Passalacqua, instead of availing himself of Roberto's help, thought fit to fling his arms round his neck, bursting into sobs and exclaiming:

"Scapegoat! Scapegoat!"

Roberto freed himself, with a shudder of disgust, and stopped his ears, while Passalacqua, turning again to Mauro, went on:

"You see, Patriot? This is how Italy rewards her heroes! Like this!"

"The son of Stefano Auriti!" Mauro Mortara was muttering to himself, his eyes starting from

their sockets, beating his breast as he spoke. "The son of Donna Caterina Laurentano! . . . And I came to Rome to see this! But what have you been doing?" he demanded of Roberto, gripping both his arms and shaking him. "Tell me that you are still the same man! Yes? You are? Very well, then . . ."

He snatched at his medals; tore them from his breast; flung them on the ground; stepped on them and trampled them underfoot; then, turning to the police inspector:

"Tell that to your Government!" he shouted. "Tell them that an old campaigner, come on a visit to Rome, with his Garibaldi medals, when he saw them arrest the son of a hero who died in his arms at the battle of Milazzo, tore the medals from his breast and trampled on them! So!"

He turned to Roberto, took him in his arms, and, hearing him sob upon his shoulder began trying to soothe him with murmurs of "My boy! My boy!" patting him on the back.

At this stage Antonio Del Re rushed from the room, with a moan of rage, knocking a chair over in his flight. Celsina, who was keeping an eye upon him, ran after him, in alarm, calling to him by name. Mauro Mortara turned with feline stealth, as though, at this headlong exit, it had flashed across his mind that they were determined at all costs to prevent Roberto's arrest; and shewed himself prepared for any deed of violence.

Freed from his embrace, Roberto stepped in front of the inspector.

"Here I am."

"No!" cried Mauro, seizing him again by the arm. "Don Roberto! Do you surrender like this?"

"Kindly let me go. . . ." said Roberto Auriti; then, turning to the inspector: "You must excuse . . ."

He beckoned to Nanna, who was now gasping for breath, with both hands pressed to her heart, and kissed her on the brow, saying:

"Courage. . . ."

"And what shall I say to your mother?" exclaimed Mauro Mortara, waving his hands in the air.

Roberto's bosom heaved, he covered his face with his hands to dam the torrent of his emotion, and left the room, escorted by the inspector, while Signora Lalla, supported by her husband and the pupil, started moaning rather than shouting:

"Roberto! Roberto! Roberto!"

Mauro Mortara was left staring, crushed and senseless. When Passalacqua informed him of all that had happened, and, fresh from his recent perusal of the newspaper, set before him all the misery and shame of the moment:

"This," he said, "this is Italy?"

And, seeing his great dream shattered, he thought no more of Roberto Auriti, of his arrest;

heard, saw nothing any more. He saw only his medals lying there on the ground, trampled underfoot.

Don't bother!

As he was going down the stair from Roberto's, Corrado Selmi ran into the police inspector and his escort, on their way up to arrest the innocent man. He stopped for a moment, undecided; but at once felt his brain filled by a dense mist, and in that darkness of wrath and anguish heard a voice warning him from the depths of his consciousness that he could not by any precipitate action prevent this atrocious injustice. He went on his way down the stair; got into his cab again and felt a sense of stupor upon the driver's inquiring where he was to take him. Why, home of course; no need to tell him that. Where else could he go? What was there left for him to do?

“Via San Nicolò da Tolentino.”

And, as though he were already there, he saw himself going up the stair of his own house: now, he was going into his bedroom; he crossed to the corner, where there was a hanging cabinet of green lacquer: opened it; took out a little bottle, and. . . . Instinctively, he had thrust his hand into his waistcoat pocket, where he kept the key of that cabinet. A strange thing: he was thinking now of the mirror, of a little oval mirror that hung beside the cabinet, from which he ought to

have been keeping his eyes averted, so as not to see his own reflexion. And yet he could, he did see himself: yes, in that mirror, with the bottle in his hand: he saw the expression in his eyes, which smiled back at him, as though they did not believe that he would do the deed. No! First of all he must write out and seal a statement for Auriti; just a few lines, stating the facts explicitly. His accusers did not deserve a final outburst on his part. A couple of lines, only, to save his friend, who by this time must be in prison.

His enemies. . . . But who were they? How many? The whole world! Was it possible? All his friends of yesterday. Everybody, and yet nobody, if he took them one by one. For he had never done anything to any of them that could transform the hearty welcome of yesterday into such aloofness of spirit, such hostility. It was the moment, the blind fury of the moment that was falling upon him, that was finding its prey in him, and seizing him and tearing him to pieces.

Oh, how the cab was crawling! It seemed to Corrado Selmi to be prolonging his agony with contemptuous cruelty.

"I am not at home to anybody," he said to Pietro, the old servant who had been with him for so many years.

And his first impulse, on entering his bedroom, was towards the cabinet. He checked it. He remembered the statement that he had to write. He

decided, however, to secure the bottle first, and, without looking at it, took it with him to the writing table in his study. He stood there for a while, as though trying to remember something which he had intended to do, and which had passed out of his mind. Instinctively, gently, he tiptoed back to his bedroom; his eyes found their way to the little oval mirror, hanging on the wall by the cabinet. He had forgotten to look at himself in it. He shrugged his shoulders and turned back to the writing table; sat down; took from the blotting book a sheet of paper and an envelope; looked to see whether the stick of wax and his seal were on the table; rose again and returned to his bedroom to fetch the candle from his bed-table.

The statement turned out less brief than he had planned, since, as an additional safeguard to Auriti's innocence, he decided to cite as a witness the governor of the bank himself, who also was now under arrest, and with whom, before incurring the debt under another name, he had come to a secret agreement.

When he had finished writing, he looked at the bottle on the table and at once felt all desire to read over again what he had written vanish. They seemed to him enormous, all the little things that still remained to be done: folding and refolding the sheet; slipping it into the envelope; lighting the candle; melting the stick of wax in the flame; applying the seal. . . . He went through the

whole process with irritation. He gasped for breath; his fingers slipped and fumbled, losing all sense of touch. He was just preparing to shut the envelope when from the street beneath rang out the strident, jerky strains of a barrel organ.

It seemed to Selmi that this sound, coming after all that had happened, must split his head: he stopped his ears, sprang to his feet, screwed up his face as though he were suffering unspeakable torments, was going to the window to hurl down abuse at the itinerant musician.

Ah no, perdio! Not that! At the sound of a trumpery little Neapolitan street song, no, no, no.

He felt humiliated by this outburst of rage. Or was it that he was really a scoundrel? No: quietly, at his ease, with a steady hand, without that dry feeling in his mouth; quietly, after he had soothed his nerves, and with a smile, he must kill himself, as was his duty.

He took the sealed envelope with the statement and slipped it into the blotting book; put the bottle of poison in his pocket. He wished to go out again, for a last drive, to bid farewell to life, released now from every care, rid of every burden, free from all passion, with clear eyes and a serene spirit; to bid farewell to life, to smile at it with his habitual gentle smile; to enjoy for the last time the things that remained to him, things that were rejoicing in this day of sunshine, unconscious

amid the turbid flow of all these misfortunes, which presently time would have swept away. Yes, a last farewell to life, to the beautiful things which remained to him and which he had loved so well.

And he made the driver take him to the Janiculum. At first, confused by the dull roaring sound that was caused by a momentary stoppage in his ears, he was incapable of noticing, or seeing, or thinking anything; only when the carriage turned into the Via della Lungara, and passed the Regina Coeli prison, he reflected that possibly at that moment Roberto Auriti was confined there; but he refused to let the thought worry him any more. Soon enough, with the help of that statement, he would be released from prison, to carry on his precarious, tiresome, detrimental existence with that Signora Lalla of his and Passalacqua and Bonomè, whereas he himself, on the other hand—ah, he would have been delivered!

When he reached the summit of the hill, it seemed to him a real deliverance, that altitude, from which he could gaze upon Rome the divine, luminous in the sunlight, beneath the intense azure of the sky; a deliverance from all the bitter little miseries that had hurt and stifled him down below; from the shock of all the petty vulgarities of every day; from the tiresome quarrels of little men, who sought to dispute his right to move and to breathe. He felt himself, up there, free and

alone, free and serene, raised above all hatred, above all passion, above and beyond time, exalted, assumed to that altitude by his great love of life, alone with and in that love, in defence of which he was going to take his life. And in it and with it he felt himself made pure, in an instant, for all time. In the eternity of that instant were cancelled, were absolved and vanished his weaknesses, his transgressions, his faults, since he had been after all a man, and subject to the law of necessity. Now, with death, he would surmount them all. There remained only, at this stage, luminous, indefeasible, immortal, his love of life, his love of the country, the fatherland for which he had fought and conquered. Yes, like all those who, down yonder, in defence of Rome had made a good death, cut off in the frenzied ardour of youth and rendered immune to all the frailties, free of all the obstacles which might, in time, have deformed and degraded them. Now, at this moment, he likewise, stripping himself of all his frailties, freeing himself from every obstacle, aflame and quivering with the old ardour, with the golden light in his eyes of the setting sun upon the houses of the great four-square city, he was preparing for himself, like them, a good death, a death that exalted him in his own eyes, without envy of those others who stood in effigy up there, handed down to posterity in a marble bust.

He remembered that he had with him the bottle

of poison; but no! 'At home! In the house! Quietly, on his bed: he must not make a scene!

He went down again to the city.

At the foot of the hill, he felt that he had left his soul up above, in the sunlight. Here, in the shadow, was his body, still alive, for a little while longer. He looked at his hands, his legs, and at once felt a thrill of horror. But, as though a voice from above were recalling him sternly to his duty, he controlled himself and in answer to the voice said yes, he would in a short time destroy that body, without hesitation.

After crossing the iron bridge, he heard several newsvendors crying a special edition of the most widely read sheet in Rome. Thinking that this must be for him, he stopped the carriage and bought a paper. Sure enough, on the front page was a report of the Parliamentary sitting and at the head of the sixth column his own name stood out in a headline

CORRADO SELMI

as the title of the principal feature of the paper. He began to read it; but soon felt a curious disgust for it: he noticed that to him all this stuff was already a vain and vacuous language, which had no longer any power to arouse any sentiment in him, as though it were composed of words that had no meaning. It seemed to him that the writer

of the article had had no other object than to prove that he was alive, quite alive, and that, being so, he could and was going to play tricks with his words, so that the other living men, his readers, might say: "Isn't he a smart fellow? Isn't he clever?"

The sheet, flimsy as it was, seemed to him suddenly, with his name printed there at the top of the page, a tombstone, his own, which he himself, for some unaccountable reason, was taking with him in the carriage, straight to his grave; a strange stone, upon which, instead of the customary lying tributes, were carved accusations and insults. But what did they matter now to him? He lay beneath.

And indeed, as though to see where he did lie, he turned the page.

At once his eye was caught by a headline in huge type, spread across five columns of the second page:

THE MASSACRE AT ARAGONA IN SICILY

and beneath, in smaller type: *Revolt of sulphur workers—Attack on mining engineer Costa's carriage—Scenes of savagery—Mob kill him and wife of Deputy Capolino and set fire to their bodies.*

Corrado Selmi sat there, crushed by horror and disgust, his eyes fixed upon the account. He real-

ized that it was for this and not for himself that the special edition had been published. The wife of the Deputy Capolino? He had seen her at Girgenti, when he went down there to support Roberto Auriti's candidature and to assist Verònica in his duel with her husband. Such a beautiful woman! . . . Murdered? And how did she come to be driving in a carriage, at Aragona, with this engineer? Ah, she had travelled from Rome with him. . . . An elopement? . . . He was Salvo's engineer. . . . The sulphur workers had marched in a body from the village to the station, determined not to let him pass, unless he brought them an assurance from Rome that the promises would be fulfilled. . . . What was this? . . . That Préola . . . Marco Préola, that wretch whom Roberto Auriti had flung through the glass door in the office of that clerical rag . . . he was now in command of this savage horde of assassins . . . he had incited them to the attack on the carriage, the butchery. Oh, the cowards! To attack a woman. . . . Costa fired . . . and then . . .

Selmi could read no more; he sat back in disgust with the paper lying open in his hands, stifled, poisoned by the foulness of the massacre; and seemed to feel himself assailed by the fierce breath of a whole populace turned to savages, drunken with blood. In a fit of loathing he rolled up the paper in a ball and flung it from the carriage. To-morrow, if not that very evening, in another

special edition, it would be employing that huge type to announce his suicide.

As he let himself into the house, he was informed by Pietro, his old servant, that Auriti's nephew, Antonio Del Re, was in the sitting room.

"All right," he said. "Shew him into the study when I ring."

Pietro was perhaps expecting a reprimand for having admitted the young man, and had his answer ready, to wit, that the young man had forced his way into the house, notwithstanding his having definitely assured him that the master was not at home, and then done everything in his power to keep him out. He spread out his arms and bowed at Selmi's curt order; but, as his master made off in the direction of his bedroom, stood perplexed, wondering whether he ought not to warn him of the young man's threatening manner and distracted air. He shut his eyes, shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say: "An order's an order!" and withdrew to the sitting-room to keep the insolent visitor under observation.

"There," he said to him, with a glance at the door opposite. "In a minute, as soon as he rings. . . ."

Antonio Del Re could contain himself no longer; he was fuming with rage. His face, under the terrible strain of waiting, was unrecognizable. His hand strayed restlessly in his pocket. And the old servant kept his eye on that hand which,

through the cloth of his coat, seemed to be clutching a weapon.

And still the bell did not ring; and the longer the delay, the more the young man's ill-concealed impatience and the restless movement of his hand increased. The old servant, in the utmost consternation, went across to the door, took his stand in front of it, only just in time, for, at the peal of the bell, Antonio Del Re rushed at the door like a wild beast, brandishing a dagger, dragging in his wake the old man who had thrown his arms round him.

Corrado Selmi, pale as death, seated at the writing-table, with the glass still in his hand from which he had just drunk the poison, out of the bottle that lay overturned by the blotter, turned round and at once arrested, with a frigid stare and a faintly contemptuous smile that quivered on his lips, the young man's violent inrush.

"Don't bother!" he said to him. "You see? I have done it all, myself. . . . Let him go!" he ordered the servant. "And I forbid you to shout or to go for help."

He took the sealed envelope from the table and showed it to the young man, who stood gazing at him speechless and gasping.

"You are going the wrong way, my boy," he said to him. "You have a nasty look on your face. . . . But don't distress yourself: this letter

is for your uncle. He will be released. Let it lie here."

He put the envelope back on the table; blinked his eyes, set his teeth; his body grew rigid, while the deathly pallor of his face became mottled with livid spots. He tried to rise; the servant hurried to his assistance.

"Help me . . . to bed . . ."

He turned to Del Re, his eyes already beginning to wander. The ghost of a smile seemed to flicker in his lifeless face. And he said in a strange voice:

"Learn to laugh, young fellow. . . . Go out into the air: it is a perfect day."

And he passed through the door, supported by his servant.

Wolf! Wolf!

As from the Via delle Colonnelle, upon the arrest of Roberto Auriti, Antonio Del Re had escaped to Selmi's, so, but in a different mood, Mauro Mortara, picking up his trampled medals from the floor, had hastened in search of Lando Laurentano. At the villino on the Via Sommacampagna, Raffaele, the butler, had told him that his master, upon reading in the newspaper the account of the massacre there had been in Sicily, Girgenti way, had jumped into a cab and driven off to Vella's.

“And where is that? How am I going to find the way?”

“If you like, I can take a cab and go there with you.”

In the cab, seeing Mauro's breathless anxiety to reach his destination, the other asked him whether he knew the lady and the engineer.

“What lady? What engineer?”

“What! Haven't you heard? Don't you know? They have murdered them at Aragona. . . .”

“At Aragona?”

“The sulphurmen.”

“Why, then . . .” And he had stopped short, swinging round, to look first of all straight into the butler's face, with eyes that seemed to be starting from their sockets, then out of the carriage at the passers-by in the street as though all of a sudden assailed by the suspicion that a great catastrophe had occurred without his knowing anything about it.

“Why, what is coming over us? Has everything gone wrong? Murder there! Arrests here! Do you know that they have arrested Don Roberto Auriti?”

“The master's cousin?”

“His cousin! His own flesh and blood! And he goes off to the Vella! They arrest his cousin, Don Roberto Auriti, one of the Thousand, who was out in Sixty, when he was only twelve years old! And his father died here, in my arms, at

Milazzo. . . . Arrested! Before my eyes! That I should have lived to see the day!"

He had begun to raise his voice in the carriage, and to gesticulate and to weep aloud; and people were turning round, and stopping, and making remarks, seeing a man so strangely attired, with that knapsack on his back, driving along the street and shouting.

"Be quiet! Be quiet!"

Be quiet, indeed! Mauro Mortara was out for justice, and revenge for this arrest; and when Raffaele, to silence him, referred to the visit that, a few days earlier, possibly in this connexion, Don Giulio, Don Roberto's brother, had paid to his master:

"Of course!" he cried, remembering the occasion. "I was there! I was there! And I saw him weep! So this was why that poor boy was weeping? He was seeking help. . . . Then . . . then Don Landino must have refused to help him? Is it possible?"

"Perhaps because the amount was too large. . . ."

"What do you mean, too large! When the honour of a patriot is at stake! And he a rich man! And his aunt never touched a penny of her father's fortune, every penny of it went to her elder brother. . . . Oh God! God! Donna Caterina . . . the only one of them that is a worthy child of their father. . . . Now Donna Caterina

will die of a broken heart. . . . But if this is true, by the Madonna, that he has refused to help, I will never look him in the face again, so help me God! I don't believe it! I won't believe it!"

On reaching Vella's house, however, he found such a turmoil raging there that he could no longer think of calling Lando to account for the arrest of Roberto Auriti.

Dianella Salvo, his little friend Donna Dianella, his dove, who in that month spent at Valsania had contrived to conquer and melt him with the tender charm of her eyes and voice, on seeing him enter the drawing-room frowning and bewildered, immediately sprang towards him with the neigh of a frightened filly, and clung to his bosom, trembling all over, burying her dishevelled head in his flannel shirt, as though seeking sanctuary in his heart, and shouting, with a hand stretched out behind her, towards her father:

"Wolf! Wolf!"

Mauro Mortara, thus overpowered, assailed, his breast buffeted by this girl in such a state, lifted his head in astonishment, seeking an explanation in the eyes of the onlookers: he saw terrified, pained, weeping faces, hands raised in gestures of fear, self-defence, sorrow and wonder. He did not realise that the girl had gone mad. He took her head in his hands and tried to detach it from his breast, so as to look her in the face:

"My child!" he said. "What have they done

to you? What have they done to you? Tell me! Murderers. . . . Your heart. . . . They have torn the heart out of my bosom too!"

But, when he was able to see her eyes and her strange, altered face, her lips parted, now, in a mournful laugh, while a thread of blood trickled between her teeth, he was horrified: he looked again at the rest of the company and, laying her head back on his breast and keeping his hand on her dishevelled locks as a sign of protection and pity:

"Like her mother?" he said with a shudder, and stepped back, driven by the girl who, repeating against his breast that horrible neighing laugh, kept urging him in a frenzy of excitement:

"To Aurelio . . . to Aurelio . . ."

Her cousin Lillina, her face bathed in tears, hastened to the rescue, while at the other end of the room Lando Laurentano and Don Francesco Vella tried to comfort Flaminio Salvo who, at this outbreak, had buried his face in his hands, imploring her:

"Yes, Dianella, there's a good girl! He shall take you at once . . . he shall take you wherever you want to go . . . there's a good girl, dear!"

But Dianella, hearing her father's voice, overcome once more by terror, had again buried her head in Mauro's breast and clung to him more frantically than ever, wailing:

"Wolf! Wolf!"

"You have me here! where is the wolf?" Mauro called to her, encircling her again in his arms. "Don't be afraid! I am with you, here!"

"You see? You have him, here, now! You have him!" Lillina repeated.

And Ciccino and Aunt Rosa gathered round her, repeating:

"He's here! Don't you see, he's come here for you? To defend you, dear?"

The poor girl lifted her face, happy and tremulous, a few inches, to shew a smile of gratitude, and continued to thrust Mauro towards the door:

"Yes . . . yes . . . to Aurelio . . . to Aurelio . . ."

Choked by his emotion, Mauro, driven back like this, among these people whom he did not know and who were pressing round him, asked angrily:

"But tell me, what is the matter? How did it happen? What is she saying? She says Aurelio? Who is he? The son of Don Leonardo Costa? Ah, it is he . . . the man they have murdered?"

With their eyes, with their hands, they all beckoned to him to be silent, and somebody answered him with a nod of assent.

"She was in love with him? Oh, my child . . ."

Lando Laurentano and Don Francesco Vella led Flaminio Salvo from the room.

"Tell me, tell me what they have been doing to you," Mauro went on, turning to Dianella, with an almost savage tenderness. "We are going now to Aurelio. . . . But tell me what they have

been doing to you? Who is the wolf, tell me, and I will kill him! Who is the wolf?" he inquired of the others with a set countenance, which made it plain that if there really was a wolf, who had done any injury to this poor little lamb, he was ready to spring upon him.

But nobody knew with certainty what had happened, to whom actually Dianella was alluding by her cry. To her father, apparently; still, no one could say positively. Perhaps she mistook him for some one else. During their absence, Ignazio Capolino had been in the house. Dianella had stayed at home, by herself, because she was not feeling well; and upon her, unquestionably, Capolino, without mercy, maddened by the appalling tragedy, must have poured out the vials of his wrath. Ciccino and Lillina, who had been the first to return, had heard him shout:

"Your father! Your own father, 'do you hear me?"

But, upon their entering the room, he had made off, in a fury, leaving the poor child half unconscious, as though stunned by all these pitiless blows upon her head; and, a moment later, she, showing signs of terror, had begun to wail: "Wolf! Wolf!"

What had Capolino said to her?

One person only could tell, as surely as though he had been a witness of the scene: Flaminio Salvo, who in the next room, with Lando Lauren-

tano and his brother-in-law Francesco Vella, was feeling an overpowering need to confess his remorse, but nevertheless, unavoidably, in accusing himself, excused himself also.

Francesco Vella had asked him, whether he had ever noticed that his daughter was in love with Costa.

“If you were not aware of it!”

“I was aware of it. But could I, a father, bestow my daughter upon one of my own dependents? He, poor fellow, had never noticed it, my daughter was too modest, and also such a thought could never have entered his head; especially as for some time past he was head over ears in love with that other poor creature. . . . But the fault is mine, the fault is mine: I have no excuse! No one can know better than I that the fault is mine! I had been kind to that poor young man, as I had been kind to all those others who have murdered him down there! What other fruit can kindness yield? Costa had grown up in my house, like my own son; and that poor girl of mine. . . . Why yes, of course! And I, I saw clearly that the mistake that I had made at the start, in being kind to him, must end in their marrying; and yet, I confess, the idea repelled me, and I tried to put it off as long as possible. But, you see; in the meantime, I had called the boy back from Sardinia, and had put him in charge of the sulphur pits at Aragona; and just now, here in Rome, I had told

Capolino that if Costa should succeed in taming those brutes down there, I would give him my daughter as a reward. Mark this: Capolino therefore knew, and consequently his wife must have known also that this was my intention. Yes, it is true, I had other, private, intentions, or rather, a hope. . . . Gentlemen, I might well have aspired to something very different for my daughter . . .” (so saying, he looked Lando Laurentano in the face). “I had therefore brought her to Rome and proposed to leave her here in my sister’s house, in the hope that she might be distracted from her childish obstinacy. Very well, Signora Capolino decided to take advantage of this hope and bring my plan to nothing: she decided to go off with Costa, to part him from my daughter for ever. And Signor Capolino perhaps hoped that, with Aurelio married presently to my daughter and already his wife’s lover, he himself might continue to occupy a place in my household. And now, now that all his castles in the air have collapsed, he has denounced all his own machinations to my daughter as being mine! But I, I swear to you, gentlemen, I will crush him. . . . Crush him. . . . If . . . ever again . . .”

He shrugged his shoulders, waved the threat aside with his hands, as though any definite proposal, now, filled him with overpowering nausea, choked him with disgust. And he flung himself down in an armchair, brooding darkly; he sat

there, as though more and more terrified by the arid, horrid void which, after this long flow of words, he had created within himself.

Nothing: he no longer felt anything: no pity, no affection for anyone. A vast disgust, indeed physical sickness was what he felt now at everything, and especially at the part that he would have to play, of a father inconsolable at this calamity to his daughter, which as a matter of fact aroused no feeling in him but irritation, that was it, and scorn, almost shame, yes, shame. This mad craving of his daughter for her lover revolted him as something shameful. And he asked himself with savage crudity, whether he had ever really loved his daughter, from his heart. No. From a sense of duty he had loved her. And now that this duty had become so serious and painful, he could feel nothing else for it but disgust and nausea. Yes, because his daughter too was doomed by fate! Was not her mother mad? And now, everything that could happen to him had happened. The cup was full, and overflowing! The destruction of his existence by fate was accomplished; and he, in that arid, horrid void, remained master, with nothing left to fear. Death he did not fear. Henceforward, he was raised above everyone and everything.

And he looked at the flash of the big stone in the ring upon the stunted little finger of his hairy hand, resting upon his leg. That flash, for some

unaccountable reason, made him think of the white body of Nicoletta Capolino, which those brutes down there had burned. He raised his head, wrinkling his nostrils. Oh, how he longed for a cigar! But he remembered that he must not smoke, because at such a moment it would be thought improper. He heard Francesco Vella say to Lando Laurentano:

"Why, yes, it is obvious: they had eloped! They left here four days earlier, and had only just reached Aragona. . . . Where were they during those four days?"

And he interposed, in a changed voice, with a changed face, as though he were no longer the same man:

"There can be no doubt about it," he said. "The day before yesterday a letter reached me from Naples, from Costa, in which he resigned from my service. And so he went down there to die on his own account: and for this too, therefore, I need feel no remorse."

At this moment Ciccino Vella entered the room, tongue-tied by the awkwardness of the message he brought and would have preferred not to convey.

"Lando," he said, hesitating, "I have something to tell you. . . . That old man . . ."

"Mauro?"

"Yes, that's right . . . came here with your servant to find you, to . . . he says . . . he says that they have arrested Roberto Auriti."

Lando turned pale, then coloured, knitting his brows as though perplexed by a thought which was forcing itself upon him against his will; he shewed signs of embarrassment at finding himself among people who had a far more serious trouble of their own.

“Go, go,” Flaminio Salvo hastened to reassure him, holding out one hand and laying the other on his shoulder to escort him from the room.

“I trust,” Lando said to him, “that this illness of your daughter’s will be merely a passing disturbance.”

Flaminio Salvo shut his eyes and shook his head:

“I am under no illusion.”

And they returned to the drawing-room, so, hand in hand.

Mauro Mortara, already out of temper, choking, apart from the poor mad girl who clung to his breast, could not control himself at this spectacle: he shook himself free, with a roar in his throat, and shouted to the two women who were standing by him:

“Take her . . . catch hold of her. . . . He gives him his hand. . . . I cannot look on at such a thing. . . . Do you know what his name is? He bears his grandfather’s name: Gerlando Laurentano!”

And, tearing himself from Dianella’s arms, he fled from the room.

Flaminio Salvo's lips parted in a bitter smile, more of derisive pity than of anger; and, to the apologies offered him by Lando Laurentano, he replied:

“Infection. . . . It is nothing, Prince. . . . Insanity is, alas, as we know, infectious. . . .”

CHAPTER V

It weighs nothing. . . .

AT Girgenti, the entire population were thronging upon the wide expanse of ground outside Porta di Ponte, where the road enters the town, waiting for the carriages to bring up from the station, down in Val Sollano, the remains, which were understood to have been collected in a single coffin, of Nicoletta Capolino and Aurelia Costa.

Amazement, grief, horror were depicted upon every face at this bestial crime, which for the past two days had kept the town and the whole of the Province in a ferment. In every eye was a close and painful attention, a cautious anxiety to gather fresh news of more precise details and not to let anything escape; for no one was satisfied with what he already knew, and everyone wished to see and, so to speak, touch with his eyes, in that coffin for which they were waiting, the proof that what had happened outside the town, and seemed, in its ferocity, to be incredible, was really true. Not having been able to witness the spectacle of that ferocity, they were determined at least to behold, so far as might presently be possible, its pitiable result.

Old considerations, in the case of one at least of the victims; others, more novel, which were now being divulged and increasing, amid stupefaction and pity, the tragedy of the event, if they restrained actual tears, could not prevent commiseration at the atrocity of these people's death, indignation at the reproach which it cast upon the Province as a whole.

Living still in the eyes of them all was the image of the beautiful lady, when, haughty and aloof, exquisitely attired, she used to drive past in Salvo's carriage, barely bowing her head in acknowledgment of their greetings with a smile of wistful gratification. Everyone saw in his mind's eye, with a strange sharpness of perception, some living detail of her person or expression, the whiteness of her teeth just discernible between her scarlet lips, when they parted in that smile; the sparkle of her eyes between their dark lashes; and they asked themselves with a vague misgiving, who could ever have imagined, then, that this was to be her end.

To resign like that, in an instant, the life of ease and honour, to which, with Salvo for a friend and her husband in Parliament, she had risen, and to elope with a man with whom, once already, she had refused to be joined in matrimony, why, to be sure, she must have been out of her mind. But perhaps it was done from spite, that was it, from spite against Dianella Salvo, who was secretly in

love with Costa. . . . Perhaps? And was it not common knowledge already that she, poor girl, as soon as she heard of the elopement and massacre, had gone mad, like her mother?

And so, from an act of treachery, this pair, from an adventure which for one of them alone perhaps was an amorous adventure, and which had already by itself created such a scandal in the neighbourhood, had leaped into the jaws of such a death. But how, why had they made for Aragona, where he must have known that all those hyaenas were in wait for him, famished for months past by the shutting down of Salvo's sulphur pits? Because, having eloped together thus, they could not shew their faces in Girgenti. Their elopement was an insult not so much to the husband as to Salvo, and therefore they had turned to the one spot where everyone was against Salvo. Possibly he, Costa, believed, or at any rate hoped that, if he were to announce immediately upon his arrival that he too had rebelled against Salvo, they would welcome him as one of themselves and no longer hold him responsible for the broken promises. Besides, it was there, at Aragona, that his home was; perhaps he was going there merely to collect his belongings, the instruments of his profession, his books, with the intention of leaving again at once, of returning to his former employment in Sardinia. Yes; but with the lady? Ought he to have gone there, into the midst of his enemies, with the

lady? He might at least have left her, first, in some place of safety! Ah, but perhaps she, she herself had insisted upon facing the danger with him. She had a proud spirit, that lady, and had known how to shew it in front of that horde of savages, rising to her feet in the carriage, to shield Aurelio Costa's body with her own, and crying out that he had left Salvo's employ for their sake, because of the unfulfilled promises! But that rascal Marco Préola had raised his voice:

“Death to the whore!”

And the horde of savages, rendered powerless at first by the superb temerity of the lady, had been stirred to action. Perhaps even then Nicoletta Capolino might have succeeded in controlling them, in making them listen, had not Aurelio Costa instinctively, at that call for blood, at the vulgar insult, sprung up in her defence, pistol in hand. Then the carriage had been attacked from all sides, and both he and she, under a shower of knife-thrusts and hammer-blows, had been first stunned, then literally torn to pieces, as though by a pack of savage dogs; the carriage too, even the carriage had been shattered, broken in pieces; and when upon the pyre formed of the spokes of the wheels, the doors, the seats, had been flung the wretched, unrecognizable remains of their two bodies, a man had been seen to pour over them, from a big brass reflector lamp, purloined from the railway station near by, a stream of paraffin,

and a crowd of others, with eager, breathless haste, set fire to the pile, as though to remove at once from their sight the appalling spectacle of carnage.

So, the incidents of the slaughter were in detail and with a sort of ecstasy of horror described and re-enacted, as though everyone had been present at the scene and saw it still before his eyes. They all saw that bloodstained brute pouring the oil from that brass lamp upon the limbs obscenely mutilated and heaped upon the pyre, and the others stooping eagerly to kindle the flames.

It was known that a large number, more than sixty, had been arrested, as well as Marco Pr  ola, that abortion of nature; originally the forlorn hope of the Clerical Party, then President of that Fascio of sulphur workers at Aragona. Before long, therefore, perhaps that very day, another spectacular event: the convoy of all these miscreants, in chains, two by two, from the railway station to the prison of Santo Vito, amid a solemn escort of police, mounted carabinieri and soldiers.

Here, here at last came the carriages! There, look! Where was the coffin? Oh, what a little one! There it was! On the third carriage, there, the one with a serjeant on the box! Why, it all went on the back seat! That one, that box there! That little tin box! That one? With the chief constable on the seat facing it? Yes, yes! And who was the other man by his side? Ah, Leo-

nardo Costa! The father! The father! Oh, poor father, with that box there, facing him!

A cry of pity, of horror, rose from the whole crowd at the sight of that father, who seemed petrified in an expression of rage, but at the same time stupefied in horror; with his eyes fixed on that box, as though he were asking how it could contain his son, the pillar of his house! But what could there be left then, of his son, if there were two bodies there, two? The heads only? Perhaps, torn off, yes, and a limb or two, charred. Oh God! Oh God!

And almost all of them wept, and many sobbed aloud.

Hearing their cries, their sobs, Leonardo Costa, as he drove past, uttered a cry also, gave vent to the ferocity of his grief in a howl, in which there was nothing human; then fell back, writhing, in the arms of the chief constable.

The carriage stopped at the corner of the piazza where the Prefecture stands, which is also the police headquarters. Two policemen took charge of the coffin; Cavalier Franco helped Leonardo Costa to alight. The poor old man, solidly built as he was, could not stand on his feet; one of his ears was bleeding, because at the station, in a paroxysm of rage, he had torn out one of his golden earrings. Other policemen formed a line in front of the gate, to prevent the crowd from breaking into the courtyard of the building.

And the crowd remained there outside, irritated, cheated, unsatisfied. What was going to happen next? Was this the end of it all? Was the coffin to remain there, in the police station? Was there not to be a funeral procession to the cemetery of Bonamorone? That was where the ancestral vault of the Spoto family was. Now, there was no one left of that family. Aurelio Costa had still his father; for Nicoletta Capolino, no one: her husband could not be there; there might have been her stepfather, Don Salesio Marullo; but it was common knowledge that the poor man, abandoned by everyone, had gone to seek a charitable asylum at Colimbètra, and had been living there for some months, sick. Perhaps Leonardo Costa was claiming his son's remains for himself, to take them to the cemetery at Porto Empedocle; and judicial objections were being raised to his desire.

The crowd, by degrees, began to melt away, amid endless comments.

Leonardo Costa was demanding exactly what the crowd had imagined. The chief constable, Cav. Franco, tried to persuade him to have a little patience, since first of all the judicial procedure must, as he explained, be gone through, there in the office. . . . Why yes, in the course of the day; after the examining magistrate's visit. Costa, as though he did not understand, insisted, obstinately repeating, in identical words, his piteous request.

And Cavalier Franco, albeit filled with pity for this poor father, groaned, he could stand it no longer. This was a terrible time for him, and he did not know where to turn, now that from all parts of the Province, from all over Sicily, reports kept coming in that grew daily more alarming; it seemed that at any moment a general insurrection must break out, and the military garrison was scattered, and more scattered still the police.

But what did he want, what more did this good man want now? He wanted . . . he wanted that the remains of his son—such as they were—should not remain there mixed up with those of the woman, that execrable woman! Why, why had they been gathered up like that together?

Cavalier Franco lost his patience.

“Why?” he shouted. “What do you suppose there is inside there?”

And he pointed to the box, which had been laid on a table.

“Oh, my son!”

“Everything that could be collected, out of the flames. Nothing! Practically nothing!”

“Oh, my son!”

“What do you propose to put aside, to identify? They came too late. At the station, there were no police. Before the inspector could arrive from Aragona, the fire. . . . Nothing, I tell you . . . a few scraps of bone. . . .”

“Oh, my son!”

"You can't recognize anything. . . . Yes, yes, poor man, yes, cry, cry, it's the best thing you can do. . . . Poor Costa, yes . . . yes. . . . It is a thing that . . . oh God, oh God, what a thing to happen . . . yes, it makes one deny humanity! But get into your mind, so as to pluck this arrow at least from your heart, get into your mind that there is not . . . your son is not in there; there is nothing there at all. . . . And besides, poor man, think that the woman, even if you hate her, he loved her; and perhaps he is not sorry now that whatever there may be in there of him should be together, mingled with her remains. . . . Poor woman! She may have had her faults, but there, what a fate hers has been too!"

"No . . . no . . . she . . . I can't . . . I can't speak . . . she . . . to perdition . . . my son . . . she! Don't you know, Signor Commissario, that my son was loved by his master's daughter? We know for certain . . . a fact, this is . . . the poor child has gone mad, like her mother! It has been . . . it has all been a plot. . . . That woman and that murderer of a father . . . they had arranged it all between them . . . to ruin this son of mine . . . to destroy that blessed creature's love for him. . . . Oh, Signor Commissario, bind me, bind my arms; Signor Commissario, lock me up, lock me up in prison, for, if I set eyes on him, that murderer who has made me lose my son like this,

I shall kill him, Signor Commissario, I shan't answer for myself, I shall kill him! I shall kill him!"

Cavalier Franco clasped his hands together, wrung them and waved them in the air:

"But do you suppose," he then shouted, his eyes starting from their sockets, "do you really suppose that I can listen to such talk? I feel for you, you are mad with grief and do not know what you are saying. But, perdio, your son, your son . . . at a time like this, when any trifle is enough . . . a mere spark, to set the whole of Sicily in a blaze . . . is not content with running away, like a schoolboy, with the wife of a Deputy . . . but goes of his own accord, there, as much as to say: 'Here we are, tear us in pieces! Are you looking for fuel? Here it is! Take us!'—Perdio, they must have been mad, blind. . . . I don't know what to say! Of whom are you complaining? And we are here, and have to be responsible for everything . . . even for an act of madness like that! And in addition to everything, I have to listen to you too saying: 'I shall kill him, kill him, kill him!' Whom are you going to kill? Do you suppose that Salvo, even if all your fantastic ideas are true, has any need of your punishment? His daughter's madness is sufficient punishment for him!"

Costa, after this outburst, no longer dared to raise his voice; he looked at the other, with eyes

that were glazed with tears; gnawed his finger; murmured:

"If he were capable of remorse, Signor Commissario! But he is not!"

Cavalier Franco rose from his seat, and left the room.

"Go, go. . . ." said Costa, behind his back; then, cautiously, stole across to where the box was lying upon the table, and tried to lift it.

A torrent of quick, silent sobs, in his throat and nose, made his head shake convulsively.

It weighed nothing, nothing at all, that box!

He fell on his knees before the table, resting his brow upon the chill surface of the metal, and began to moan:

"My son! . . . My son! . . . My son! . . ."

A spider without a web.

Two days later, there arrived at Girgenti, unexpected, in mourning attire, the Hon. Ignazio Capolino.

The position in which he had been placed, not so much perhaps by the sudden calamity as by his own violent outburst, which had deprived Dianella Salvo of her reason, was so difficult and uncertain, that he was obliged to collect all his faculties, there on the spot, to find a way out of it of some sort, as quickly as possible.

The scandal of his wife's elopement had been

suppressed by the horror of her death; the tragic circumstances of that death made him immune from the ridicule which her elopement might have brought upon him. It was sufficient therefore for him to present himself to his fellow citizens, like this, funereal in aspect, but at the same time austere reserved, to derive advantage from the general commotion, without however sharing in it, since his wife had done him an injury. And they must all see that he was suffering, shattered, crushed by the atrocious crime, and that he more than anyone deserved compassion, since by the two so greatly pitied victims themselves he had been injured, so that he could not mourn, could not even now mourn his own calamity.

And yet . . . how was this? Entering the house again, that house which his wife's exquisitely skilful management had made so perfect a setting for the comedy of polite and graceful falsehood, the rivalry in charming courtesies, in which they had both of them so whole-heartedly engaged, so that their life might not cause too great a scandal among their neighbours, be too distasteful to themselves; and feeling in the brooding silence of the rooms, which remained with all their furniture as though waiting, the void, the void in which from the first moment of his calamity he had seen himself as lost . . .—how was this?—as he opened the door of her bedroom and detected, faint but still present, the sweet, voluptuous perfume of

herself, why, with an irresistible impulse, which stunned him by its incoherence, but at the same time pleased him as an un hoped-for consolation of melancholy, heart-broken tenderness—he wept, yes, wept at the thought of her, wept for the first time since the news of her death reached him, wept as he had never wept in his life, conscious in his tears almost of a grief that was not his own, but was that of the tears themselves, which welled from his eyes against his will; but, precisely because he had not willed them, with so sweet, so refreshing a savour!

But he must not, no, no, he must not . . . because. . . . Why? Why must he not weep? Oh, was she not, then, his necessary and irreplaceable companion? The precious sharer in his subtle and complicated devices, who, hurrying—more on her own account, perhaps, that time than on his—to a place of safety, to which he, nevertheless, had driven her—had fallen? Yes, and with so horrible, so horrible a fall!

No . . . outwardly, that was it, outwardly at least he must not weep for her. . . . Like this, in private like this; especially as these tears were good for him, now. He had been left alone; and alone now, by his own efforts, he must provide for himself, defend himself; and he did not yet know, did not see how.

Not by crying like this, though, certainly!

And Capolino rose to his feet; wiped away, first

of all with his knuckles, then slowly, carefully, with his handkerchief, the tears from his eyes, nose and cheeks; put on his tortoise-shell glasses, and planted himself, grim, severe, frowning, before the wardrobe mirror.

Heavens, how his face had worn, aged, in a few days!

Grief? What grief? He could not admit that he had felt any grief . . . unless at that moment, perhaps, a little. But perhaps, ah, perhaps in his heart he had felt it, a very real grief, since at Rome, upon hearing of the tragedy, he had been blinded by the rage which had driven him to attack Dianella Salvo.

Ought he to repent of that outburst?

He had, by it, drawn upon himself for ever the hatred, the mortal enmity of Salvo.

But even if he had managed to control himself in that first moment, to deny himself the fierce satisfaction of that revenge, what would he have gained? To him, left alone, without his wife by his side, would Flaminio have gone on giving help and support, impelled by his remorse at and secret complicity in her sacrifice? Possibly his daughter, already an invalid, would have gone mad even without that outburst, simply upon hearing of Costa's death. And then? Flaminio Salvo would have considered that he had already paid an ample penalty in his daughter's madness; and would have ceased to shew any consideration for him;

would indeed have dismissed him from the house, as the embodiment of his remorse. So much was evident. Suppose, then, that Dianella had not gone mad, that her mind had been gradually set at rest, was Flaminio Salvo the man, once he had attained his object, to remain grateful to the memory of the person who had enabled him to attain it, at the cost of her own life; and, for her sake, to her husband, left a widower? When already, immediately, to unburden himself of all responsibility, he had proclaimed to the four winds of heaven that Nicoletta Capolino and Aurelio Costa had run away together and that Costa had resigned his post and had therefore gone down to die on his own account, there at Aragona, with his mistress!

Yes: she had run away with Costa, had his wife; but who had driven her to commit that act of madness? Who had sent Costa to Rome on the subterfuge of a plan that had to be submitted to the Ministry? Who had provoked her jealousy, or rather challenged her self-esteem, by letting her see his daughter's marriage to Costa as an immediate possibility? And he, Capolino, he, her husband, had been obliged to lend himself to all these perfidious manoeuvres, which were to end in so dire a tragedy; and then to be left like this, in the lurch, with no further claim to assistance, now that the fruit of all this treachery and crime had been gathered!

Ah no, perdio! He must not repent of that outburst. If he had lost his wife, the other had lost his daughter! They were quits now, and stood face to face. Salvo would at once withdraw all financial support. It rested with himself, therefore, to make immediate provision for even the barest necessities of life. And all his credit elsewhere must decline with Salvo's friendship.

How was he to manage? What was he to do?

As these thoughts passed through his mind, his restless fingers were playing with the Deputy's badge that hung from his watch chain. He still retained the prestige that this badge conferred. For the moment, Salvo could not wrest it from him. And with it in his possession, in the eyes of one who counted, if not for more, certainly not for less than Salvo in the district, he was still a Deputy. Don Ippolito Laurentano would never allow the man who sat in the Chamber as the paladin of his faith to be beset by paltry material difficulties.

That was the thing to do: at once, before Flaminio Salvo could reach Girgenti and go out to Colimbètra to poison the Prince's mind against him, he would hasten there himself and tell the Prince openly of the other's perfidy. After living for all these months with Donna Adelaide, the Prince would no longer be inclined to side with his brother-in-law; not to mention that Capolino would have in his favour the emotion aroused by

his tragedy. Against this, it was true, Salvo might set that of his own daughter; but upon this very point he would go and forewarn the Prince, proving to him that not he, with his natural and legitimate outburst, had been the cause of her madness; but her father, her father himself, who had taken these violent measures to prevent his daughter from marrying Costa, sacrificing the latter and destroying him together with Capolino's wife. Now, to free himself of all remorse, he was seeking to cast the blame upon him, and to be rid of him, as he had already rid himself of Costa and the wife.

There was his plan! But neither on that day nor on the day that followed had Capolino time to go to Colimbètra and put it into effect. An unbroken stream of visitors kept him at home, to his own intense satisfaction, albeit he knew and saw clearly that it was curiosity rather than pity for himself that had moved all these people, who undoubtedly, on the morrow, at a sign from Salvo, would be turning their backs on him. In any event, when he did go to see the Prince, he would be able to speak of this solemn expression of the sympathy and condolence of the entire town; not only that, in many minds which, stirred by the tragic event, were like a soil well ploughed and prepared, he could in the meantime sow the seeds of hatred of Salvo, without appearing to do so.

"Don't speak to me of it, please!" he protested,

his face changing at the slightest indication. "I should have to say things, things that . . . no, I say nothing; please, don't make me speak. . . ."

And if some one, hesitating, persisted:

"That poor girl . . ."

"The girl?" he exclaimed. "Ah, yes, poor thing, she is another poor victim! Not more than the others, though, surely! . . . Please, don't force me to speak. . . ."

When, at an opportune moment, the room being packed with people, there entered D'Ambrosio, the same who had been his second in the duel with Verònica, and was distantly related to Nicoletta Spoto, a scene occurred which, even if Capolino had deliberately arranged it, could not have turned out more effective or favourable to his cause.

D'Ambrosio entered, stifled by emotion, and with his arms outstretched. Standing in the middle of the room, they embraced one another, clasped one another tightly for a moment, both sobbing audibly. In a loud voice, with his habitual impetuosity, D'Ambrosio began, freeing himself from the other's embrace:

"Everybody in the town is saying that Nicoletta, my cousin, was that idiot Costa's mistress: is it true? You must know better than anyone: is it true?"

Speechless with horror, the onlookers turned to watch Capolino.

He sank down, as though he had been stabbed, in the armchair, his arms drooping limply upon his knees, and shook his head bitterly. Then with a barely perceptible gesture of his hands, he spoke:

“There are many . . . too many things that I ought to say, but I cannot. . . . Even your pity, you must understand . . . yes, yes . . . even these tears, my friends . . . are burning me! Because from those two, who deserve them by reason of their fate, but from you, my dear people, from you; not from me . . . from those two also I have suffered wrong; but most of all from him who led them on to their ruin; who held them in the hollow of his hand, and . . .”

“Salvo!” D’Ambrosio ejaculated. “They have arrested Marco Préola at Aragona; but he, Salvo, by the Madonna, is the man they should arrest! It was he who starved the whole village! He is the real murderer! And God has punished him rightly, with his daughter’s madness! He will have to spend the rest of his life now with two madwomen, in spite of all his money!

At this Capolino sprang to his feet, sublime.

“For pity’s sake! No! No! I cannot allow such things to be said in my presence! Do you mean to defend the murderers? For shame! We all know that Salvo was acting within his rights in shutting down the sulphur pits there! Everyone has to provide, as he thinks fit, and as he

chooses, for his own interests. Besides, has he not taken all sorts of trouble here for the revival of the industry? No, no! Don't you see, my friends? It is I who am speaking now, I, and I go so far as to say to you that he, on his part, as a father, believed that he was acting for his daughter's good! You people have no excuse for not admitting it; I might refuse to admit it, I alone, because the methods he chose to adopt have destroyed my home, shattered my existence! But he was aiming, there, at the good of all those brutes, and here, at his daughter's good!"

Ten, fifteen, a score of hands were held out to Capolino, in an outburst of admiration for such magnanimous generosity; and Capolino felt a cubit added to his stature.

"I may perhaps feel myself obliged," he went on, with melancholy gravity, "to hand back to you the mandate with which you have chosen to honour me."

"No! No! What has that got to do with it? Why?" some of his hearers protested.

Capolino, with a wistful smile, raised his hands to check this affectionate protest.

"My position," he said. "Just consider. Could I have any further relations, I do not say family ties or ties of friendship, but simply any common interest with Flaminio Salvo? Of course not. Well, then? I must provide for myself, gentlemen, whereas the mandate which I hold from you

requires complete independence, the independence I derived from my post in Salvo's bank. Now . . . now I shall have to begin to think seriously of my future. It is not a matter to be decided like this, on the spur of the moment. . . ."

"Yes! Yes!" his comforters replied in chorus. "These are personal matters! Political representation . . ."

"Ah, ah . . ."

"Why! That's got nothing to do with it. . . ."

"Another matter altogether. . . ."

"Besides, for the present . . ."

"For the present," he said, "it is enough for me, my dear friends, to have explained this to you: that I am ready for anything, and that I look upon things in general and upon my own tragedy with an equal and, so far as is possible, a serene mind. And now, I thank you all, my friends."

Later in the day, having gone to the Bishop's Palace to pay Monsignore a visit, he received from him information of such a kind with regard to Don Ippolito Laurentano and Donna Adelaide, that he decided to abandon there and then the plan he had originally prepared, feeling that it would be advisable, rather, to wait for Flaminio Salvo's return from Rome, before going to Colimbètra to try another plan, which had flashed across his mind, a plan of supreme audacity.

Hand in hand.

Flaminio Salvo did not wish to leave Dianella in Rome in some nursing home, as the doctors and his sister and brother-in-law advised; he said that, if anything, he might instal her in some such place at Palermo, to have her nearer to himself and to be able to visit her more frequently; but his own house might now—he added—be converted into one of these private asylums, under the control of one or more doctors with the assistance of trained nurses: he was the only member of the household who still retained his reason; but he hoped that very soon, with the example of his wife and daughter and a little effort on his own part, he might manage to lose that also.

When he was upon the point of starting, however, he found himself obliged to appeal to Lando Laurentano, to let him have as a travelling companion Mauro Mortara, from whom Dianella refused to be separated, and who was perhaps the one person capable of inducing her to emerge from a dark closet, the sanctuary to which she had fled, and to start for home.

Lando Laurentano was making hasty preparations for his own departure, having been summoned to Palermo by his comrades of the Central Committee of the Party; he therefore replied to Salvo that they might all four travel together, and

that he would come in the morning with Mauro and call for him at Vella's.

Flaminio Salvo detected in the face, voice and gestures of the young Prince a strange feverish agitation, and was more than once on the point of asking him the reason; but refrained.

Lando Laurentano was in this state for a reason that would never have dawned upon Salvo's mind at that moment: namely, the tremendous impression created in Rome by the suicide of Corrado Selmi.

The news had been made public that same evening, as he was on his way home from Vella's with Mauro. The cry of a news vendor had informed him of what had happened. He had stopped his cab and bought a copy of the paper. But, instead of rejoicing him, the first effect of the sudden announcement had been to stun him. He had told the driver to stop beside a street lamp, so that he might read the paper, notwithstanding Mauro's impatience; had skipped the long obituary notice prefixed to the report of the suicide, and had let his eye run down the column. From the statement supplied by Selmi's servant he had learned, first of all of the armed assault by Roberto Auriti's nephew, after Selmi had already swallowed the poison; then—ah then!—of a visit, which the reporter termed "intensely dramatic," as Selmi was drawing his last breath, from "a veiled lady" whose name, for obvious reasons, was suppressed,

“who had come,” the report went on, “unaware of the suicide, perhaps to offer help and comfort to her friend, after the challenge launched by him, earlier in the day, at the assembled Chamber.”

Lando Laurentano had felt not the least doubt that this veiled lady was Donna Giannetta D'Atri, his cousin; and had torn up the paper, in rage and disgust, shouting to the driver to take him home at once. There he had found, in an agony of distress, Celsina Pigna and Olindo Passalacqua, desperately searching for Antonio Del Re, who had been missing since midday. So inopportune at that moment had Lando felt the ridiculous appearance of the man, the girl's ravings, all this anxious appeal to himself to look for a young man whom he had never seen and who was so far from his thoughts, that he had given way (which was quite unlike him) to a violent outburst of rage. He had summoned Raffaele, his butler, to tell him to place himself at the disposal of the two visitors, and had remained alone with Mauro. The latter, interpreting this outburst as a sign of his contemptuous indifference to his cousin's arrest, had been unable to contain himself any longer; had stood before him, ablaze and trembling with fury, and shouted:

“I wish to go away, at once! This very moment! I never wish to look you in the face again!”

“Mauro! Mauro! Mauro!” Lando had exclaimed, waving his clasped hands in the air.

Mauro had thereupon plunged his hand in his pocket, and brought out his medals:

“Do you see? From my breast I tore them, before the inspector, when I saw your cousin arrested! What sort of blood have you in your veins? Is this the youth of to-day? This?”

“The youth . . .” Lando had begun to answer with vehemence; but had at once stopped short, pressing his clenched fists to his lips, and sinking down on a chair, his elbows resting upon his knees and his head in his hands.

The youth? What youth? How? When the niggardly, timid, bullying jealousy of the old men was crushing it like this, under the monstrous weight of the meanest prudence and of such endless hardship, humiliation, shame? What youth? When it was held responsible for the passionate expiation, in silence, of all the mistakes that had been made, all the disgraceful transactions, the mortifying of all pride and the spectacle of all this filth? Look, how the work of the old men, here and now, in the very centre of Italy, in Rome, was falling like sewage into a drain; while up in the North it was being entangled in a shameless coalition of sordid interests; and down in Lower Italy, in the Islands, had deliberately dwindled into vain babblings, so that the inertia of ignorance, the strain of poverty might continue there,

and the pack of Deputies come up to Parliament to form the nameless, supine majority! There, there alone, perhaps, at the present time, the new youth, the youth that had been stifled, poisoned, sacrificed, might deal a blow to that vile, insolent oppression by the old men, and find at last an outlet and assert itself victorious!

Lando had sprung to his feet to proclaim this hope aloud to Mauro Mortara; but had stopped in compassion, seeing the old man weeping with those pathetic medals in his hand.

By morning, Antonio Del Re had been found. Olindo Passalacqua came to show Lando a couple of telegrams and a money order, dispatched at urgent rates from Girgenti to procure the young man's immediate return; but went on to say that Del Re obstinately refused to go back to Sicily. Lando had thereupon begged Mauro to go and find the young man and invite him to travel with them next day; and this Mauro had readily agreed to do.

But how was he to propose next to Mauro that they should travel with Flaminio Salvo?

On the following morning Ciccino Vella arrived betimes at the villino on the Via Sommacampagna to discuss the best way of getting Dianella Salvo out of her hiding place and inducing her to start. It would be fatal if she caught sight of her father! She must not set eyes on him throughout the journey. Uncle Flaminio and Lando would have to travel in a separate com-

partment of the carriage, without letting themselves be seen. There was also the young man, Del Re? Very well: all three of them must remain apart, in concealment. Mauro and Dianella would be by themselves, in the next compartment: a whole carriage would be reserved for the party.

It was less difficult, upon these conditions, to persuade Mauro to render this service to Salvo. When he understood that neither that morning, at Vella's, nor afterwards, during the whole of the journey, would he see him, and that it was a question of performing not so much a service to him as a work of charity to that poor demented girl, he frowningly consented, and went on ahead with Raffaele to Vella's house.

There was no necessity there for either entreaty or exhortation: as soon as Dianella saw Mauro again, she sprang from her hiding place, and clung to him, imploring him to let her escape with him. He was obliged, on the contrary, to make an effort to detain her, until they had made her as tidy as possible, brushed her dishevelled hair, put a hat on her head, so that at least she might not attract undue attention driving through the streets with this old man who was himself so strangely attired.

When the pair of them, hand in hand, he with his air of a strayed savage and that knapsack upon his back, she with her eyes and lips agitated by a mournful, meaningless mirth, with her hair loosely bundled beneath the hat that sat askew on

her head, passed through the drawing-room on their way out, those who beheld them saw clearly that, the two of them having come to Rome, at that time, one with her love, the other with his country in his heart, they could not go away again, save like this.

What was their conversation, during the journey?

Through the communicating door of their compartment, Salvo and Laurentano, listening by turns, heard them conversing together, at length, and imagined at first that the old man and the girl understood one another. Yes, indeed, they understood one another perfectly, because both of them, each on his own account, spoke only in the terms of his own mania. And the two manias sat there side by side and hand in hand.

“A woman . . . shocking! I mustn’t say Aurelio. . . . Signor Aurelio. . . . Signor Aurelio! But how can he possibly have forgotten? . . . Such a great big cut on your finger. . . . Come, come away, here, in the dark . . . in the passage. . . . Let me suck the blood from your finger. . . . A woman? Shocking. . . . Signor Aurelio. . . .”

“These are the young men . . . these! The new generation. . . . To behold this, oh murderers, we fought so many battles . . . sacrificed our lives . . . to behold this, Donna Dianella! And what am I going to hang up, now, beneath the General’s letter in the camerone? What am I

ever to hang up there again, after all that I have seen?"

"Ah, but who knows what the year will bring? The mulberry tree, in March, gathers fresh blood. . . . And then, when it is in love, and ready to shoot, it is soft, as soft as dough, and you can bend it as you please. . . . Who knows what the year will bring?"

"The good is doubtful, but the evil is sure, my child! The good is doubtful, but the evil is sure!"

So they conversed between themselves, in the other compartment.

Neither Lando nor Flaminio Salvo paid any attention, meanwhile, to another person, in their own compartment, who said nothing, and yet, no less than the two next door, was out of his mind.

Antonio Del Re could see nothing, feel nothing, think of nothing any more. The desperate fury with which he had flung himself upon Selmi had riven his spirit like a flash of lightning. Upon leaving Selmi's house, he had remained void, suspended in a stupefying, terrifying blackness; and remembered nothing more, where he had gone, what he had done, how and where he had passed the night, if indeed the night, a night, had passed. He did not reply to any question; perhaps he did not hear. See, he could and did; at least he sat staring in front of him; but a reason he no longer saw, the reason of the appearance of things and of the actions of men. . . .

He had objected, not indeed to returning to Sicily, but to moving of his own accord from the spot to which his feet had led him and where he had dropped in exhaustion. He had moved, when Mauro seized him round the chest; but without hearing a word of what Mauro was telling him about his grandmother and mother. Passalacqua and Celsina had gone with him, in the morning, to Lando's villino; before he left, he had seen Celsina smile at Ciccino Vella, take his arm, get into a cab with him and Passalacqua: all this he had seen, and more still, in imagination; and nothing, nothing at all had stirred within him.

When, after crossing the Straits of Messina, Lando Laurentano left the train, to take another train for Palermo, Flaminio Salvo felt a certain dismay at the thought of being left alone in the compartment, for a whole day, until the train reached Girgenti, with this young man whom he did not know, who two days earlier had drawn a dagger to kill Selmi, and who was now fastening his eyes upon him with so fixed a stare, grim and at the same time meaningless.

Yes, he had three lunatics for his travelling companions; and perhaps no less mad than these three was the fourth who had just left the train with the intention of turning the whole Island upside down! Was he alone, therefore, by a terrible judgment, to preserve intact the privilege of not having in the slightest degree veiled, or clouded,

whether by remorse, or by pity, or by any further affection, or by any further hope, or by any further desire, that lucid cruel limpidity of mind? He alone.

And, as though to savour the mockery of his fate, he stole once again to the communicating door between the compartments, and pressed his ear to the ventilator, to listen to the meaningless babble of the old man and the girl.

The last tear.

As soon as Mauro Mortara, upon their arrival at Girgenti, was able to tear himself from the arms of Dianella Salvo, he dashed off to the house of Donna Caterina Laurentano. There he found Antonio Del Re still in the arms of his mother who, hugging and shaking him, was endeavouring frantically, but in vain, to melt him.

When Anna saw Mauro enter the room, she left her son and ran to meet him:

“What is wrong with him? Tell me, you, what is wrong with him?”

But Mortara shook off her arms and drowned her cry with:

“Your mother? Where is your mother?”

Giulio appeared, grown ten years older in a few days. In his eyes, in his outstretched arms lurked the hope of receiving from Mauro some definite information as to Roberto's arrest, Selmi's suicide, whether Selmi had indeed left any statement

exonerating his brother, as the newspapers alleged. From his nephew he had been able to find out nothing, even though, when he was in his mother's arms, he had shaken him furiously to make him speak.

But Mortara shook him off too, repeating, with stubborn rudeness:

"Your mother? I know nothing! I know they arrested him before my eyes! I won't see anyone! I only want to see her!"

Giulio stood perplexed, wondering whether to admit him to his mother's bedroom, suddenly like this.

From the day on which he, driven by the urgency of the situation, overcoming all his reluctance, at first with circumspection, then resolutely, in so many words, had told her that she must appeal to her brother Ippolito to save her son, she had sunk into a sort of apathy, as though life and the things around her had suddenly been deprived of all meaning. Not a gesture, not a word. Nothing. And in this immobility and this silence there had been from the very beginning something so absolute and invincible, that it had been impossible for the others to make any gesture, to utter any word, to rouse or stimulate her.

Giulio had known that he would kill his mother, if he spoke. And so indeed it was; at once, with the almost mechanical precision of a decree of fate, he had spoken, and he had killed her. She

could not have gone to her brother, to save her son: it would have been her death. And behold, she was dead.

Both he and Anna had hoped, at first, that she merely did not wish either to move or to speak; not that she was actually unable. But very soon they had discovered that she was unable. However, a faint contraction that lingered on her forehead, between the eyebrows, said plainly that, even if she had been able, she would not have wished it.

They had lifted her bodily from her chair and laid her on her bed. Her immobility, her silence were corpselike; only, as yet, she was not cold. And to prevent that coldness also from coming upon her, they had hastened to cover her well with bedclothes, with loving hands, weeping as they did so.

The last act of cruelty had thus to be wrought upon her, and, to make it more unjust, by the hands of her own children. Now, by their watching and weeping, her children were proving to her, or rather were proving to themselves, that it had not been they who wrought it. If she, by all that she had done, could not pay the penalty for her son, she must pay it in this coin, now. Giulio knew this; and, knowing it, had been unable to prevent it. He was obliged to speak, to drive her to her death, to deal the finishing blow. He had then gathered her in his arms, and was now heap-

ing the blankets upon her, and folding the black woollen shawl about her shoulders, to shelter her from the final chill, and going about the room on tiptoe, so that no sound more should disturb her silence. Even the buzz of a fly would be too much, now, coming on the top of what he had done, because he must.

The thought that possibly even his own life was too much, his own breath, after what he had done, had even entered his mind.

Apart from this mother, away from Sicily, he had led his life from his boyhood. He had lived without memories or affections or aspirations, as it were from day to day: cold, detached, ironical, contemptuous.

Suddenly, when he least expected it, the destiny of his family had put out a tendril to involve, to envelop him, and had drawn him back to itself and planted him there, grafting him, re-attaching him to the root from which he had been torn; making him feel all that he had always refused to feel, remember all that he had always refused to remember.

The end of this mother, who had always felt everything, had always remembered everything, stricken down now by the blow which he had come home to plunge into her vitals, must it not now be his end also?

The trunk once felled, the branches must fall also.

In the melancholy gloom of the house, he had been horrified by the apparition of himself to himself imbued with all the sentiments and memories of this mother. But there had appeared to him also Anna, his sister: the branch that had never been severed from the trunk; that miserably, once only, for a short time, had blossomed, to yield the sour and poisoned fruit of that son whose husk not even a mother's love could succeed in penetrating. And brother and sister had clung to one another then, fused together in an embrace of infinite tenderness, of infinite anguish, in the shadows of the dark house, tasting the sweetness of the tears that were uniting them for the first time and yet were breaking their hearts.

He would have to live for this sister and for the boy.

The news of Roberto's arrest, now inevitable, expected at every moment, had finally arrived, together with the news of Corrado Selmi's suicide, but in vague terms, restricted to a few lines in the Sicilian papers, as a matter to which their readers would attach no importance, taken up as they all were, at the moment, by a morbid curiosity to learn even the minutest details of the massacre at Aragona.

Anna's trepidation for her son, alone in Rome, the thought of the help that might be given to Roberto, had prompted Giulio at first to return at once to the Capital. But how was he to leave his

mother in her condition, alone there with Anna, who kept roaming about the house, calling her son, as though she were out of her mind? And what help could he give Roberto? The only help possible would have been the money, the repayment to the Bank of those forty thousand lire, so that everyone might suppose that the money had been taken by him, for his own requirements. Selmi's suicide, now, might perhaps unlock the prison door for Roberto, but he would remain indelibly branded, after the accusation and the arrest, with the mark of a crooked complicity. How many people would believe, to-morrow, that he had come forward disinterestedly to take on the debt, in his own name, on behalf of another man? Selmi's statement, if, as the newspapers asserted, it really existed, would not be sufficient to efface that mark.

Next door, in his mother's bedroom, was Canon Pompeo Agrò, who for days past, and for hours on end daily, had never stirred from his armchair at the foot of the bed, his eyes fixed upon the spent face of the sufferer, perhaps in the hope of discovering on it some indication that she—having nothing more to say to men—desired by his means to communicate with God. More than once, in a deep voice, he had called her by name, repeatedly, but had elicited no answer.

Giulio told Mauro to wait a moment: he wished to consult Agrò, to obtain a casting vote between his hope and his fear, whether the sight of Mor-

tara, or the sound of his voice, by rousing his mother from that death-like torpor, would do her good or harm.

"I think," was Agrò's reply, "that there is nothing left now either to hope or to fear. She will notice nothing. Try. It is all the same; if she keeps on like this, death is inevitable."

Mauro came stumbling like a blind man into the almost dark room, crying aloud, in a voice hoarse with emotion:

"Donna Caterina. . . . Donna Caterina. . . ."

He stopped short, at the foot of the bed, at the sight of that face turned to the ceiling, on the heaped-up pillows, cadaverous, with eyes that the imagination could picture as clouded and thick with despairing anguish beneath the perpetual seal of their heavy, darkened lids, with an obstinate, absolute determination to die in the protruding cheekbones, the hollowed temples, the stiffened nostrils of the sharply pointed nose, the thin, livid lips, not only tight set, but in places even gummed together by dried saliva.

"Oh, child . . . child. . . ." he exclaimed. "Donna Caterina . . . it is I . . . Mauro . . . your father's watchdog. . . . Look at me . . . open your eyes. . . . I wish you to look at me. . . . Open your eyes, Donna Caterina; look at me and behold your own punishment. . . . Listen to me: I have something to tell you. . . . I have come back from Rome. . . ."

Striking against the rigid, funereal impassibility of the dying woman, Mauro Mortara's emotion was abruptly shattered into a series of strident sobs, that were very like a peal of laughter.

Agrò and Giulio, with tears in their eyes also, took hold of him and, supporting him by the arms, led him from the room.

The dying woman, left alone, in the dim light, motionless upon her mountain of pillows, heard his voice after an interval, as though it had had to make a long journey to overtake her in the profound, mysterious remoteness to which her spirit had already flown. And from those far tracts, in answer to that voice, came slowly to her closed eyelids a tear, her last tear, which no one saw. It welled from one of her eyes; ran down her cheek, fell and was lost among the wrinkles of her throat.

When Pompeo Agrò resumed his seat in the armchair at the foot of the bed, neither in her eye nor upon her cheek was there any trace of it.

Donna Caterina was dead.

CHAPTER VI

When scirocco blows. . . .

FOR Donna Adelaide and Don Ippolito Laurentano, there had begun, from the first evening when they were left by themselves in the villa of Colimbètra, a period of torture, which as they could both see would be most difficult to endure, however readily both he and she might apply themselves to the task.

As soon as the wedding guests had departed, Don Ippolito, with great courtesy, taking her hand in his, but without looking at it, so that he might not see how different it was from the hand he had once been used to hold between his own (a long, pale hand, that other, soft and tender and light!), tried to make her understand the benefit that he promised himself from her society in the loneliness of his exile, his reasons for which must, he supposed, be known to her, in part at any rate.

The speech that he made her upon the terrace, overlooking the silent countryside, already invaded by the darkness of night, had in truth been a little too long and a trifle tedious as well.

Poor Donna Adelaide, crushed by the violent shock of so many novel sensations, in the course

of that day, and now by all the darkness and silence that brooded round her and rendered more suffocating than ever the suspense of what mysteriously lay in store still for her "terrible maiden-ladyship," after a certain point had been incapable, however earnestly she tried, of listening to another word of the quiet, interminable speech. She had received the impression that it, most inopportunately for her, was intended to drag her by force to the summit of a high and cloud-girt mountain, from which it would be difficult for her, if not actually impossible, to come down again in a fit state to endure further surprises, fresh emotions, which this night must certainly be holding in store for her.

Not from ill-will, but from want of air, that air which at a certain stage she felt to be lacking, she had never been able to listen to long speeches. Oh, good Lord, why did people keep on circling round a subject when in the end they must always come down to doing the same things, those which nature ordains? What a beastly habit, good Lord! And productive of no effect but exhaustion and irritation. Yes, irritation as well. Because the things that had to be done were simple, and could all be numbered upon the fingers of one hand; so that, in the end, everybody must admit that all this beating about the bush was not only useless but actually foolish and harmful, inasmuch as, afterwards, what with people's exhaustion,

and their irritation at this admission, they were done late and done amiss.

She had begun by gazing, with imploring, startled eyes, at the Prince, or rather at his long, interminable beard. Then, in her stunned condition, she had felt an overpowering impulse to withdraw her hand and to breathe, to draw breath at least, since she could not groan, could not cry aloud to give some relief to her suffocation and rage. Finally, she had succeeded in conquering her stupor: her ears had come to life again for an instant, but only to escape far away, to seize hold of a thread of sound, in the obscurity of the night, that offered her some relief, a slight distraction.

There rose from the shore, far below, invisible, a dull continuous murmur. And all of a sudden, just at the point when the Prince's speech had become most pathetic, Donna Adelaide had come out with the question:

"What is it, the sea? Do you hear it like that, every night?"

Don Ippolito, puzzled at first ("The sea? What sea?") had felt his spirit quail:

"Oh, yes . . . it is the sea, the sea. . . ."

And releasing her hand he had moved away from her.

Donna Adelaide, embarrassed, not knowing how to soothe the Prince's evident mortification at this inopportune question, could think of no other way than to persist:

“Does it roar like that every night?”

She had had to wait some time for an answer; when it came, it arrived from a distance, gravely:

“Not every night; when scirocco blows. . . .”

That far-away voice of the sea was at once precious to him and sad. How often, in the profound peace of the night, had it brought him anguish and companionship. Leaning back in his long chair, he had let himself be lulled by that sombre incessant roar of the waters, which spoke to him of distant lands, of a different, a tumultuous life, which he would never know. He had felt himself plunged back of a sudden by that call into the deep recesses of his former solitude.

How could he go on with his speech, after this? And how, on the other hand, could he remain as he was, in silence, leave by herself, apart, there, on the terrace, this woman, who now belonged to him for all time and had entrusted herself to his chivalry, in this solitude which was novel to her and could not, certainly, be pleasing? He must make an effort, overcome his repugnance, and return to the charge. But, certain now that he could never enter into any intimacy with her, save that of the body, Don Ippolito had asked himself bitterly, what other effect this intimacy could have than an irreparable destruction of her respect for him.

And indeed, that night. . . .

Ah, poor Donna Adelaide could never have

imagined the possibility of such a spectacle, at once so pitiable and so alarming! The thought of it still made her cross herself with both hands. Ah, *Bella Madre Santissima!* A man with all that beard . . . a serious-minded man. . . . Dio! Dio! She had seen him, at a certain stage, dash from the room, like something less than human. Perhaps he had sought a nocturnal lair, in his Museum rooms, on the ground floor. And she had spent the rest of the night, sitting up, half-dressed, by a window, listening to the sobs of a lovelorn owl, perhaps in the wood called *Civita*, perhaps in the other wood, beyond, the *Torre-cheparla*.

Fortunately, when morning came, the sight of the surrounding country, and of the exquisite appointments of the villa had to some extent consoled her and restored her to her normal spirits, in which she would willingly, were it not for the fear of making matters worse, have gone to the Prince and told him, in so many words, without stopping to weigh them, that he was not to worry or distress himself about anything, seeing that she . . . she was satisfied, perfectly satisfied with things as they were. . . .

His scowling face had genuinely distressed her! Poor man, he had not managed even to raise his eyes to look her in the face when, over the breakfast table, he began to address her again. Yes,

yes, of course: theirs was an unusual situation; to find themselves placed like this, to be husband and wife, almost without knowing one another. In the course of time, to be sure, a mutual confidence would spring up between them, and . . . but yes, why, of course!

She had noticed however that, as he made this speech, the Prince's excitement had increased, had indeed become more and more exacerbated; and with real terror she had seen the night draw round again.

For several days in succession this terror had been renewed; at length she had secured the concession of being left in peace, to sleep alone, in a separate room.

All very well; but, the 'day after, there came down to Colimbètra Monsignor Montoro, to preach her a little homily in private. Whereupon she had broken out again: Oh Bella Madre Santissima! What was that? . . . No. . . . How on earth? . . . What? . . . What ought she to do? . . . Gesù! Gesù! . . . At her time of life, airs and graces? Oh, not that! No no! No no! Not that! It was not in her nature. And besides, why should she? Could they not remain as they were? For her part, she could ask for nothing better.

The face Monsignore had made!

And poor Donna Adelaide, from that moment onwards, had not known in what world she was

living, or, as she herself put it, had begun to feel herself "captured by the Turks." . . . But how? Was the fault on her side?

The Prince, closeted all day long in his Museum, never shewed his face, except at dinner and supper, rigid, frowning, taciturn. Air! Air! Air! Yes, there was plenty, there; but it was not air that Donna Adelaide could breathe. And the absurd thing was this: the suffocation, that she herself felt, must, it seemed to her, be affecting everything, the trees especially!

On the first of the three flowering terraces in front of the villa, there had stood for more than a century a saracen olive, the sturdy trunk of which, all gnarled and knotted by its struggles against the winds or an unfriendly soil, growing aslant, at barely a handsbreadth from the ground, seemed to be supporting with infinite pain the many branches that rose, tall and luxuriant, along it. Nobody could get the idea out of Donna Adelaide's head that this tree, bowed so low and burdened with all those branches, was suffering.

"Oh Dio, can't you see? It is suffering! I tell you, that tree is suffering!"

And she had made them cut it down. When it had gone, looking at the spot where it had stood:

"Ah!" she had breathed again. "Poor thing, now it is all right! I have set it free."

Nor had she stopped there. Further proofs of her kindness of heart she had given, on moonless

evenings, at supper, to the various winged insects, which the light of the hanging lamp attracted into the dining-room.

A certain Pertichino, a boy of about thirteen, the son of the serjeant of the guard, was instructed to stand behind Donna Adelaide's chair and at once drive away these insects, as soon as they came into the room. Unfortunately, Pertichino was often lost in contemplation of the huge white cotton gloves, in which they had imprisoned his hands; and Donna Adelaide had invariably to tear him from this contemplation by her screams and starts at the jump of a grasshopper or the buzz of a flying beetle.

"It's only a moth. . . . Don't be alarmed! Here it is, a moth, look. . . ."

"Poor creature, don't let it suffer: nip off its head, quickly; if not, it will come in again. . . . Done it?"

"Done, Excellency. Here it is. . . ."

"No, no, what are you doing? Don't shew it to me: I can't bear to look at it! A moth, was it? Really a moth? Poor little creature. . . . But who told it to come into the room? With all that lovely country outside. . . . Ah, if I had wings, if I had wings!"

As much as to say that, without thinking twice about it, she would have flown away.

Don Ippolito, shocked and disgusted as he was, had allowed her to continue. But at length an

evening came when he could contain himself no longer.

They were both sitting, some way apart, upon the terrace. He was waiting until, from the dense foliage of the olives that covered the face of the hill behind the villa, the full moon should rise, to renew in him a cherished, immemorial impression. It seemed to him, every time, that the full moon, peering from the boughs of those olives at the spectacle of the vast expanse of country beneath and of the distant sea, still, after all these centuries, halted, filled with awe and wonder, finding herself gazing down upon silent and deserted plains, where at one time rose one of the most splendid and luxurious cities in the world. The moon was just about to rise, was already visible through the tangle of silvery olive-boughs, and Don Ippolito was attuning his awed and eager melancholy to receive the familiar impression, in common with the whole countryside, from which rose a subdued, mysterious chime of grasshoppers, with from time to time the cry of a screech-owl, when, all of a sudden, from the barrack-room on the crest of the Sperone, there rang out, breaking, shattering the spell, the harsh and tuneless sound of Captain Sciaralla's reed pipe. Donna Adelaide clapped her hands, in jubilation.

"Oh, pretty! How nice of the Captain to give us a serenade!"

Don Ippolito sprang to his feet, quivering with

anger and disgust, and stopped his ears, shouting in exasperation:

“Damn them! Damn them! Damn them!”

And, gripping Pertichino by the shoulders and shaking him furiously, he told him to run out and shout to the rascals from the edge of the ravine opposite, to stop their noise at once.

“And then, get out of here! Get out of my way! I never want to set eyes on you again! If people are annoyed by the flies, they can catch them for themselves! Without all this racket! I am tired, I am sick of all this vulgarity; I can’t breathe for it! I’ve had enough, enough, enough!”

And he fled from the terrace, his eyes tight shut, his hands pressed to his temples.

Gathering clouds.

It was fortunate that, a few days later, Don Salesio Marullo had appeared at the villa, with a meagre, wasted expression, timid and troubled, to crave succour and hospitality. He had appointed himself, from the day of his arrival, gentleman in waiting to Donna Adelaide, who was convinced that God had sent him to her.

“Don Salesio, for goodness’ sake, eat something! For goodness’ sake, Don Salesio, you must keep up your appetite! Quick, Pertichino, another couple of eggs to Don Salesio!”

She had set to work to fatten him up like a turkey before Christmas. The poor old gentleman,

wasted to a skeleton, had been powerless to resist; he had gobbled, gobbled, gobbled everything that was set before him, not to say shoved into his mouth, in handfuls; then . . . ah, then he had paid the penalty in tremendous colics and internal disturbances of all kinds, whereby, right in the middle of some entertainment which he had arranged with Captain Sciaralla as a distraction for the Princess, his face would turn all the colours of the rainbow and finally he would have to escape from the room, with what injury to his dignity need not be said, battered as that was already.

But Donna Adelaide rejoiced in his discomfiture. Powerless to assail the dignity of the Prince her husband, in revenge she had set herself to make havoc of every male dignity that came her way: including that of Sciaralla, the Captain. She had found by chance among the papers in the desk, in the secretary, Lisi Préola's room, some old verses in manuscript at the Captain's expense, in which occurred the lines:

Dimmi, corri, Sciarallino,
all'assalto d'un molino?
od a caccia di lumache
vai così di buon mattino,
con codeste rosse brache
e il giubbon chiaro turchino,
Sciarallino, Sciarallino?

And one day, when it had been raining in torrents, as soon as the rain ceased, she had gone

down to the level ground below the guard-room, where "the troops" were engaged in drilling, and, calling Captain Sciaralla mysteriously aside, had ordered him to send out his men with trowels in one hand and baskets in the other to collect the *babbaluceddi*, in other words the snails, which after such a downpour must be literally oozing from the soil.

The poor Captain had remained speechless at this order.

How was he to convey it, in a military word of command, to his men? For Donna Adelaide, to put him to the test, had insisted that this snail hunt should have all the appearance of a military expedition.

"But what am I to do, Your Excellency?"

"Why?"

"If we lose our prestige, Your Excellency. . . ."

"What prestige?"

"Why . . . you must understand, I have to command . . . and at a time like this . . ."

"I want the *babbaluceddi*."

"Yes, Your Excellency . . . in a minute, when I break off the parade. . . ."

"When you break off . . . what did you say?"

"The parade, Your Excellency."

"No no! Then the whole point would be gone! I want military *babbaluceddi*!"

'And there had been no way of making her go

back upon this capricious tyranny. With what effect upon discipline, Sciaralla confided bitterly next day to Don Salesio Marullo, who had for some time past been allowed to share his consternation at the news that kept coming in from all parts of Sicily, of the great ferment of the Fasci, against which it appeared as though neither the police nor the military, the "real" military, could make any headway.

"If only they realized that we are against the Government here too. . . . But now, my dear Sidon Salesio: because they are in league, not so much against the Government, as against private property, don't you see?"

"I see, I see. . . ."

"They want the land! And what if, driven out of the towns, they descend upon the country? We are a mere handful. . . . And we are all the more conspicuous, because we appear armed for battle, don't you see?"

"I see, I see."

"And being here, armed to the teeth like this, we as good as admit the danger; we challenge an attack; we are like a small country upon which they can quite well make a separate war, do you follow me? And, if we were attacked to-morrow, do you know how the Prefect would regard it? As a just retribution. He will look after the others, and will say of us: 'Ah, H.E. the Prince of Laurentano likes to play the King, does he, with his

garrison? Very good, now he can defend himself!' But with what are we to defend ourselves? Can you tell me that. . . . What is all this stuff?"

"Gently. . . . Why, with your arms. . . ."

"Arms? Don't make me laugh! You call these arms? But when a person chooses to keep people round him like this . . . and dressed up, I mean to say, just look at me . . . it requires courage, believe me, at a time like this to put on a coat that simply shouts aloud . . . and I feel myself turn pale when I look down at these red breeches . . . I tell you, Si-don Salesio, it's no joke! I mean to say, when a person makes it a point of honour not to give way to anybody . . ."

"Perhaps," Don Salesio suggested hesitatingly, "it would be prudent to collect . . ."

"More men? And whom, pray? That would be my plan! But whom? The peasants? And if they are in the league too? The enemy inside our gates?"

"True . . . true . . ."

"Of course it is! Do you know what is the only thing to be done?"

He did not express it in words: he took the lapel of his coat between his fingers; gave it a cautious twitch, made two other gestures which signified folding it up and putting it away; and followed them up at once with the query:

"What? No? You say no?"

Don Salesio shrugged his shoulders:

“I say that the Prince . . . perhaps . . .”

“Of course, because he doesn’t have to wear it himself! Si-don Salesio, the clouds are gathering, thicker and thicker, on all sides; and we shall be the first to attract the lightning, with all this iron in our hands; you shall see whether I’m wrong!”

The lightning did indeed strike, and with terrific force, a few days later, with the news of the massacre at Aragona. The bolt seemed to fall actually upon Colimbètra, since there, as it happened, beneath the same roof, were the father of the principal author of the crime, namely the secretary Lisi Préola, and the stepfather of the victim, poor Don Salesio. And the dismay and horror increased still further, when from Rome, like an echo of the crash overhead, came the later news that Dianella had gone mad.

Donna Adelaide, now directly affected by the tragedy, abandoned her attempt to kill Don Salesio with her eager, clamorous kindness, and began to cry aloud on her own account that, with Dianella driven mad by the murder, it was no longer possible for the murderer’s father to remain in the house, there, at Colimbètra! And the Prince, to silence her, unfair as he thought it to punish further the poor old man, already stricken to the ground by his son’s infamous deed, found himself compelled to send him away from the villa, with a pension. Before leaving, Préola, dragging him-

self painfully into the room, with the veins standing out upon his great skull-like head, which drooped over his chest, insisted upon kissing the Signora Principessa's hand also, and told her that he gladly offered to his employers, for his son's offences, the penance of leaving the house after thirty-three years of service, performed with so much love and devotion. Donna Adelaide, moved and repentant, flew into hysterics and called heaven to witness that the Prince was responsible for her remorse at the unjust punishment of this poor old man; yes, the Prince, yes, because of the continual state of excitement in which he kept her, so that she never knew what she really wanted and, simply to find some vent for her feelings, said and did things that were contrary to her nature.

Her ravings became more frenzied than ever, when she learned that her brother Flaminio and Dianella had returned from Rome. When Monsignor Montoro came down to Colimbètra to offer his condolences after the death of Donna Caterina, she asked him, her eyes red and swollen with weeping, whether it seemed to him human to forbid her to go to visit and help her niece, to whom she had been a second mother!

Don Ippolito, at that moment, was not in the villa. He had gone to the cemetery of Bonamorone, within a short distance of Colimbètra, to pray by his sister's grave. When he entered

the drawing-room, frowning darkly, he pretended not to see his wife's tears, and to the Bishop who came to meet him, with a mournful expression and outstretched hands, said:

"She died broken-hearted, Monsignore. Broken-hearted. Her son in prison, disgracefully compromised, with a lot more of these *patriots*, in the bank frauds. And that fellow Selmi, who came here as a second in the duel with Capolino, have you heard, he has killed himself. They are all paying now for their fine doings! There is a blight on them, Monsignore! May God have pity on the dead. I feel such a burning rage in my heart, that I find it impossible to pray. A smarting, a trembling in my knees made me rise from the grave of my poor sister, and I asked myself, was this the moment for prayer and weeping, and not rather for action, Monsignore, action, action! Ought we really to be remaining inert like this, while everything is breaking up and the people are rising? The crowds are having a fine time, incited by anarchist spoutings, they are turning out in the streets to protest against the burden of taxation, still carrying the Crucifix and the images of the Saints at the head of their processions!"

"Also those, though, of the King and Queen, Don Ippolito," Monsignore observed tartly.

"That is to disarm the troops!" Don Ippolito promptly retorted. "The proof that the heart of

the people is still on our side lies in the others! Clearly! Do you know that my son is in Sicily?"

Monsignore nodded his head with melancholy gravity, supposing the Prince to have asked this question to head him off an unpleasant topic.

"He travelled down with Don Flaminio," he added with a sigh, "and with the poor girl."

Donna Adelaide broke out in further and louder sobs. Don Ippolito stamped his foot angrily.

"We must learn to subdue our own griefs," he said haughtily, "and to take a wider outlook! Know how to live for something that exists above our every-day troubles and all the afflictions that life showers upon us! I have written to my son, Monsignore, and have also sent for Capolino to suggest that he should go and discuss the situation with him, and see whether it is possible to come to some understanding. . . ."

"What, Don Ippolito?" Monsignore exclaimed, pained and shocked. "With the people who have just foully murdered his wife?"

Don Ippolito again stamped his foot upon the carpet, clenched and shook his fists, and with an expression of disgust on his upturned face, fumed:

"Slavery! Slavery! Slavery! Oh, if I were not walled up here!"

Upon which, "But are we banished? Really banished?" Donna Adelaide inquired through her tears, turning to the Bishop. "Who is it pre-

vents us from leaving here, from going where we choose, Monsignore?"

"Who?" shouted Don Ippolito, swinging round upon her, his face white with anger. "Do not you yet know? Monsignore, did not you make clear to her the terms of my recent unfortunate marriage? How is it that this woman does not yet know who prevents us from leaving here?"

"But in a case like this!" wailed Donna Adelaide. "Let me go by myself! He can stay here! Holy God, one has a heart in one's bosom, after all!"

Monsignor Montoro implored her with his hands to be silent, to use some prudence. Don Ippolito raised his hands, pressed them to his face and held them there for a long time; then, disclosing a completely altered expression, of intense bitterness, profound abasement, said:

"See, Monsignore, try to persuade my brother-in-law to bring his daughter here, to her aunt. Possibly the quiet, the change of scene, may do her good."

"What, here? Really here? Oh, if she comes here . . ." Donna Adelaide broke out in a frenzy of joy, almost leaping up and down on her chair. "Yes, yes, yes, Monsignore dear. Do you hear? It was he said it! Make her come here, Monsignore, at once, here, my precious child!"

Glad of the concession, Monsignore held out his plump, white hands to arrest her onset:

“Wait a moment . . . if you don’t mind. I must tell you . . . oh, a thing that has touched me so, so deeply. . . . Here, yes . . . but wait a moment . . . you will see that it is better to leave the poor girl at Girgenti for the present. . . . Wait: perhaps we have a way of curing her. Yes, why, the night before last, do you know who came to see me at the Palace? De Vincentis, that poor Ninì De Vincentis, who has been in love with the girl for years, as you know. Such a dear boy! Oh, if you had seen him! In a state, I assure you, that made one’s heart bleed. He began to cry, to cry heartbrokenly, and begged me, implored me to tell Don Flaminio to trust in him and let him stay beside the girl, because he with his love, with his warm, insistent pity hoped to arouse her, to call her back to reason and life. Well, what have you to say to that?”

“Magari!” exclaimed Donna Adelaide. “And Flaminio? Flaminio?”

“I carried out the mission at once, yesterday morning,” Monsignore replied. “And Don Flaminio, who knows the young man’s warm heart, his gentle nature and his stainless honour, accepted the offer, promising De Vincentis that the girl shall be his if he performs the miracle of curing her. And now the young man is there in the house with the poor girl. Let us leave them together, Donna Adelaide, and join in prayer to God that the miracle may be accomplished!”

With this exhortation, Monsignor Montoro took his leave. On the stair he told Don Ippolito that he had in mind the idea of issuing a Pastoral to the faithful of the diocese, and that in a few days' time he would come again and read it to him, before sending it out. Don Ippolito spread out his arms and, as soon as the Bishop had driven away in his carriage, went and shut himself up again in his Museum.

Donna Adelaide continued to cry, first from emotion at this action on poor dear Nini's part, then in despair, because she knew only too well the opinion that her niece had held of the young man in the past. Perhaps, if she could have been by the girl's side as well, to persuade her . . . you never could tell!

And she flew into a rage again, torn between her conflicting emotions, and felt herself devoured by fury at this barbarity on the part of the Prince, who compelled her to remain there. And, after all, why should she? What did she represent, what part was she supposed to be playing there? No, no, no; she must get away, escape, flee, or she would go mad also!

She decided to write to her brother, imploring him to come over at once and rescue her, set her free from this prison, by fair means or foul.

Two black shawls.

Delighted at being summoned by the Prince of Laurentano, Capolino was preparing to go down to Colimbètra when, in the entrance hall of his house, he heard his old servant gruffly turning away some one who was asking for him.

He went to the door, looked out, saw two women dressed in black, each with a shawl, likewise black, on her head, drawn close round her pale, weary face.

They were Pigna's two daughters, Mita and Annicchia.

Capolino, when he heard their name, invited them into the sitting-room, and after making them sit down inquired how he could be of service to them.

For shame at their own poverty, to support their affliction with dignity, they were both striving to repress their overflowing emotion. The effort that they were making not to cry, meanwhile, combined with their shyness, deprived them of speech. And each of them pressed tightly, beneath her black shawl, the thumb of her left hand against the top joint of the forefinger, blunted, hardened, soiled and punctured by the constant plying of needle and thread, as though only in the lost sensibility of that finger could she find the strength and courage to speak.

Finally Mita, barely raising her dark-rimmed eyes, managed to say:

"Signor Deputato, we have come to beg you . . ."

And the other at once prompted, corrected her:

"We are disturbing you . . . when you have such a great sorrow at home. . . ."

"Go on, go on please," Capolino encouraged her. "I am here to listen to you."

"Yes Sir, I shall. . . . Your Honour will know," Mita went on, her cheeks colouring swiftly, "that our father and Lizio, who is . . ."

"The husband of one of our sisters," Annicchia again prompted her.

Mita cast a piteous glance of reproach at her sister.

"Have been arrested, Signor Deputato!"

"They are innocent, Signor Deputato, innocent!"

"We can bear witness that they knew nothing, nothing at all about the deed. . . ."

Capolino, confused by the breathless, eager excitement with which the sisters were now speaking, asked:

"What deed?"

"Why! . . ." said Mita. "The deed that Your Honour, alas . . ."

"Oh Lord!" exclaimed Annicchia. "It makes my heart tremble to think of it."

And Mita continued:

"They have been arrested as well, here in the town, as innocent as Christ Himself. . . . We can bear witness that they were left speechless, it took their breath away, when the news came . . . they felt the earth gape beneath their feet. . . ."

"And Your Honour may be sure," added Annicchia, "that we should not have had the courage to come here, to speak about it to Your Honour, if we were not more than certain, that they are innocent. . . ."

And Mita, with downcast eyes, put in, trembling:

"Your lady; we have worked for her, and we know how good she was . . . such a friendly lady . . . and beautiful, oh, how beautiful she was . . . it is dreadful!"

Capolino blinked his eyes, wriggled a little on his chair, and asked in a thick voice:

"Have they been to search the house?"

"Yes, Sir," both sisters replied simultaneously. Mita went on: "Police, detectives, magistrates . . . like a band of devils . . . they turned everything upside down. . . ."

"And what did they find?"

"Nothing!"

"Oh Maria, absolutely nothing. . . . A few letters . . . newspapers . . . the list of members."

"Members in name only. . . . Nobody ever came to the meetings. . . ."

"Books . . . papers. . . . They carried off

everything . . . even a piece of linen, Signor Deputato, that had a drop of blood on it, which I had spilt myself, when I pricked my finger, here, with the needle. . . .”

Capolino clutched his jaw in his hand, and sat for a while frowning, trying to think; then said:

“If nothing comes out that can compromise them”

“Oh no, Sir!” Mita at once protested. “Nothing that has to do with the deed for which they have been arrested; absolutely nothing! Your Honour may be quite sure. . . .”

“We should not have come to Your Honour” Annicchia repeated.

Capolino held up his hands to silence them; and collected his thoughts again.

“Do you know,” he asked, after a pause, “that I am not in the good graces of the authorities? Do you know that, to excuse thirty years and more of misgovernment, they want it to be believed that all these riots in Sicily have been secretly engineered by the Clerical Party, to which I belong?”

“Oh, Your Honour . . . what an idea!” said Annicchia, clasping her hands. “When Your Honour has had . . . after Your Honour”

“All the more! All the more!” Capolino cut her short. “They will say: ‘There, can’t you see it’s all a plot? The heart is one thing, politics another! Here he comes in person to plead for the accused. . . .’ That is what they will say!”

The sisters remained bewildered, crushed.

"And how can anyone believe such a thing?" asked Mita.

"Why, they don't believe a word of it!" Capolino replied with a contemptuous smile. "They pretend to believe it. It is their excuse. And I, if I appeared in court, you can understand, should be playing into their hands, without obtaining anything for you. That is just how things stand! It was the same in 1866, before you were born or thought of, the popular rising, due to political and administrative injustices, was put down to this scapegoat of a Clerical Party. It is the most convenient excuse, for the people in power, and one that is certain to be effective!"

The sisters sat for a while in silence, lost in thought, as though they saw the hope, that had brought them there, creep back into a wilderness of suffering, banished by an unsuspected argument, which they could not clearly understand.

"We had supposed," said Mita at length, "that if Your Honour were to say a word . . . not only before the authorities . . . but in the town as well. . . . We live by the work which we two do, my sister here and myself. . . . No one will give us any more work, now, because everyone, after this arrest, believes that our father and our brother-in-law were accomplices in the crime which has quite rightly infuriated the whole town. . . . Now, if Your Honour, who has been more

wronged than anyone else, were to say a word . . . their innocence . . .”

“And there is also this, Signor Deputato!” broke in Annicchia, unable any longer to restrain her tears, “that our sister, Signor Deputato, when the police came to arrest her husband and our father, had her baby at her breast. It poisoned her milk, Signor Deputato; and now the baby is dying, and we don’t know what to do for it; and our sister seems to have gone out of her mind, what with her little boy dying, and his father in prison! There are five of us sisters left at home; try as we may, we can’t do anything to help her. . . . That is why we have come here, to appeal to you, Signor Deputato!”

Capolino rose, as though propelled from his chair by his emotion.

“I shall see . . .” he said, “I shall see that something is done. . . . Give me a little time. . . . I must think first, because of my . . . I mean to say, my political responsibility. . . . The heart, as I said just now, is one thing; politics another. . . . But I shall see. . . . I don’t bind myself. . . . I shall see that something is done for you, never fear. . . . Calm yourselves, calm yourselves . . . and courage, my dear girls, courage! This is a terrible time for everybody, believe me . . . and nobody has yet managed to see a way out . . . nobody!”

So saying, he escorted them to the front door;

refused to listen to any apologies or thanks; shut the door gently after them.

Without putting any faith in this vague promise of assistance, the sisters, as soon as they were in the street, felt a certain relief at the step they had taken, a certain excitement, a certain joy at having managed to speak, by which they felt their courage somewhat restored. But presently, when they thought of the quarter to which they had turned, they relapsed into their sombre grief, into the abasement of a burning sense of shame.

They called at the Post Office, to collect a small sum of money, which Celsina had sent them from Rome, and of which they did not know what to think. . . . And other money, at this time, little, oh so little, the piteous and repellent fruit of another notorious disgrace, came from their elder sister, from Rosa, to those hands worn with toil and now forced to remain idle, forced to gather up the sad burden of this unsought assistance.

The fresh web.

The thought that in the eyes of the world he figured as going to Colimbètra not of his own accord, but by invitation, was highly pleasing to Capolino.

There was there, at that moment, hanging from the bough, a pear, which at one time had remained unripened by the heat of his desire; but now, by all that he could conjecture from recent informa-

tion, must be more than ripe, ready to drop, at a cautious but daring twitch from his hand.

This, ah this, would be the perfect consummation of his revenge! And everything appeared to have been marvellously preordained, so that with the greatest possible facility his revenge might be consummated in this way! Adelaide Salvo was still an unmarried woman in the eyes of the law.

Had he not felt an unreasonable secret jealousy at the time of the arrangements for her marriage to the Prince of Laurentano? What reason, indeed, could there be for this jealousy, since Adelaide Salvo could not any longer have become his wife, he being already married to Nicoletta Spoto? And yet . . . and yet he had felt this jealousy, which was now revealing itself to him as unreasonable not in the original sense, but in another that was just the opposite. Because, if he could have foreseen at the time, that it was only as a result of that specious wedding that Adelaide Salvo would be able one day to become his wife, it was not jealousy that he must have felt, but pleasure. But he had not foreseen it then, as he saw it now; and had accounted for his unreasonable jealousy by the fact that he could not look upon Nicoletta Spoto as a real and proper wife, but rather as a partner, a companion in adventure; the true wife for him, even though he was no longer a free man, was still Adelaide Salvo.

Now. . . . Oh, it would be another colossal

scandal! Which, however—unlike the previous scandal, which had ended in tears—might perhaps end in laughter. . . . And by it he would be relieved from playing the part of victim, which had been cast for him by the former scandal, namely the scandal of poor Nicoletta's elopement with the unfortunate Costa. And Flaminio Salvo, who had plotted the other scandal of his wife's elopement, as previously he had plotted his sister's half-and-half marriage, would now be left doubly ridiculous and doubly punished: punished by the instrument of his own misdeeds, of the crime, that was to say, which had set him, Capolino, free from Nicoletta, and of the illegal marriage, which, by making life unendurable to his sister, delivered her into Capolino's hand, free to contract a perfectly regular marriage with him.

Once he was Adelaide Salvo's husband, what would it matter to him if he forfeited his Deputy's badge? There was still a long time before the next dissolution. . . . He would persuade Adelaide to fly with him to Rome, to take refuge in the house of her sister Rosa. As a measure of prudence, to establish his rights as her deliverer, he would first put in a few days at Naples with her who, poor thing, must be so sorely in need of those diversions which only a big town like Naples could offer her. In Rome, they could without causing any stir contract the civil marriage. Francesco Vella would manage to find a place for

him as counsel to the Railway Department; and it went without saying that Vella would be delighted that Capolino, become his brother-in-law once again, should keep that badge dangling from his waistcoat. In time, even Flaminio Salvo himself, by the intercession of Don Francesco and Donna Rosa, would perhaps be appeased and would refrain from putting obstacles in his way.

The important point, now, was to persuade Adelaide to brave the scandal of an elopement, at this unfortunate moment of her niece's insanity. But Monsignor Montoro had told him that the Prince absolutely forbade his wife to go to Girgenti, even if only to visit her brother's house. Another marvellously propitious circumstance was the compassionate offer of service to the poor girl made by that dear fellow, Ninì De Vincentis. For if Dianella had been taken to Colimbètra, to be with her aunt, as the Prince had suggested, so far from thinking of an elopement, he would not have been able so much as to set foot in the house again! But could Adelaide be satisfied with this vague hope, this meagre consolation in absence, of knowing that poor San Luigi to be on his knees before her demented niece? If the truth were known, all that ardent longing, however sincere it might be, to visit her niece, must be merely a pretext for getting away from Colimbètra. The reasons for her discontent all persisted, exacer-

bated if anything by this prohibition. Nor would Flaminio Salvo ever be prevailed upon to persuade the Prince to grant this exeat to his sister. He must dwell upon this point, make it plain to Adelaide that her brother was not the man to fall short of the terms he had stipulated with the Prince, upon any consideration; so that she, losing all hope of assistance from her brother and seeing herself condemned to languish there in boredom and disgust, might see no other way of escape but in himself, and find in her desperation the courage necessary for flight.

These thoughts and memories and suggestions Capolino turned over in his mind as he drove down from Girgenti to Colimbètra. But they aroused in him neither eagerness nor warmth. He was conscious rather of a nauseating frigidity, as though his life had become congealed; he felt that this revenge of his was for things that were left behind in the past, irrevocable, and already dead in his heart, and that accordingly he would derive no pleasure from it, nor any promise of future happiness. He was avenging a man who, once upon a time, had been rejected by Adelaide Salvo; but was he any longer that man? Too many things that ought not to have happened had (alas!) happened, things the dead weight of which he could feel in his heart, for him to take any pleasure now in his revenge. And it was just all these dead things that made it so easy for him. This

was why he felt that nauseating frigidity. In Nicoletta Spoto he had been able to find a certain compensation, a solace in the nausea of his abject state; life for her and with her was almost worth the discomfort of being vile. . . . But to create a fresh scandal now, to insult such a man as Don Ippolito Laurentano, for Adelaide Salvo. . . . Perhaps, however, taking it all in all, it would be a relief to Don Ippolito to have his wife stolen from him! At the moment, his self-esteem would be slightly injured; but it was not a bad thing that at him, who had been able to enjoy the personal satisfaction of always holding his head erect, with so much dignity and pride, fate itself should now, at the eleventh hour, by the hand of Capolino, deal a blow, like this, in passing. Ah, Most Noble Prince, you must bow to the spirit of the age! We can allow you a bodyguard dressed in the Bourbon uniform; but you will do well to learn that, in the present year of grace, there is a certain risk in marrying a woman before God's altar alone. . . .

Yet another providential coincidence, and this one really un hoped-for, and such as almost took the wind out of his sails, he found as soon as he arrived at the villa.

Don Ippolito, indignant on the one hand at the Bishop's want of faith; completely disillusioned, on the other hand, by Lando's reply, which had reached him overnight from Palermo, as to the

possibility of coming to an arrangement with the Clerical Party, had taken refuge, as upon so many other occasions, when in need of comfort, in the study of ancient records, in his long interrupted work upon Akragantine topography.

As in the case of the acropolis, so in that of the emporium of Akragas, he had set himself against all the topographers, ancient and modern, who placed it at the mouth of the Hypsas. Here, he maintained, there had been merely a landing-place, whereas its emporium, its true emporium, Akragas, like other cities of ancient Greece, which were not situated actually upon the sea, had established at a distance, in some bay or inlet that would offer a safe anchorage to ships: Athens, at Piraeus; the Attic Megara, at Nisaea; the Sicilian Megara, at Xiphonium. Now, what was the bay or inlet nearest to Akragas? It was the so-called Cala della Junca, between Punta Bianca and Punta del Piliere. Very well then, there, in the Cala della Junca must have been the Akragantine emporium.

He had arrived at this conclusion with the help of an ancient Legendary of Saint Agrippina. And he was hugely delighted with a page, which he had contrived to insert in the dry topographical discussion, describing the voyage of the three Virgins, Bassa, Paula and Agathonica, who had brought the Saint's body by sea from Rome after her martyrdom under the Emperor Valerian.

There was no doubt that the three Virgins had landed with the body of the Saint on the Akragantine shore, at a spot named Lithos in Greek and Petra in Latin, the spot that to this very day is known as Petra Patella, or Punta Bianca. Very well, in the text of the ancient hagiographer one read that, at the moment when the three Virgins landed, a monk who was leaving the monastery of Saint Stephen in the village of Tyrus, hard by the emporium, bound for Agrigentum, had stopped, attracted by the sweet savour that issued from the Saint's body, and had then hastened to the city to announce the portent to the Bishop, Saint Gregory. If, as the topographers, ancient and modern, asserted, the emporium was at the mouth of the Hypsas, and accordingly the *vicus* of Tyrus and the monastery of Saint Stephen were there also, how in the world could this monk, on his way to Agrigentum, encounter at Punta Bianca the three Virgins as they landed with the body of the Blessed Martyr? It was wholly inadmissible. The monastery of Saint Stephen at Tyrus must have been there, by Punta Bianca, and therefore the emporium must have been there also. And the most convincing proof lay in the name of this village, identical with that of the great Phoenician city: Tyrus. This name had been given it, in all probability, by the Carthaginians at the time of their thriving trade with the Akragantines, and came from some hill, which must

have risen close to the village: *tur*, in Phoenician, signifying a hill. Was there, perhaps, a hill to be found by the mouth of the Hypsas? No; the hill, which, indeed, bears the generic title of Monte Grande, rises precisely there, by Punta Bianca and commands the Cala della Junca.

Don Ippolito had risen betimes that morning and had ridden out, escorted by Sciaralla and by four of his men, to make a careful examination of these sites, and especially the side of that Monte Grande, in the district called Litrasi, where there are certain remains, believed by some topographers to be Phoenician tombs, but, in his opinion, of far more recent origin and grouped and excavated in a style common in Sicily in the days of the Later Empire, so that they might date back to the episcopacy of Saint Gregory, in other words to the time of the landing at that spot of the three faithful Virgins Bassa, Paula and Agathonica with the fragrant corpse of the Holy Martyr Agrippina.

On his homeward journey, albeit on every side there lay spread out to enchant the eye, in the almost springlike warmth, vast carpets of velvety green, here gilded by the sun, there vaporous with deep violet shadows beneath the intense and ardent azure of the sky, Don Ippolito, as he gazed at his hands, resting upon his saddle-bow, had had but one thought in his mind, that of death, of his own departure from these scenes, which could not

be much longer postponed. But, contemplated thus, beneath that sun, in the midst of all that verdure, while his body swayed rhythmically with the gentle motion of his horse, death had inspired in him no horror, but rather a lofty serenity, tinged with regret and at the same time with satisfaction, at the refinement and nobility of the thoughts and interests with which he had always interwoven his life amid these cherished scenes, to which presently he must bid a last farewell. And he had taken a long plunge into this novel sense of serenity, as though to wash himself clean of the agonizing terror which death had always given him until then, which had been responsible for this degrading second marriage, a marriage that had profaned the dignity of his old age, the austerity of his exile.

Shortly after midday, arriving at Colimbètra, tired after his long ride, he entered the drawing-room and found Capolino and Donna Adelaide engaged in earnest conversation; she, excited and in tears; he, pale and in a fervour of agitation. The Prince stopped short on the threshold, revolted rather than annoyed.

“Oh, Prince . . .” Capolino at once began, rising to his feet, at a loss for words.

“Don’t move, don’t move . . .” said Don Ippolito, holding out his hand, more to prevent the other from approaching him than as an invitation to him to remain seated. “I make no apology

for being late, because the Signora, I can see . . . has been describing me to you as such a barbarian, that you cannot have regretted the want of my company. . . .”

“No . . . the . . . the Princess . . . really . . .” stammered Capolino.

Don Ippolito assumed a haughty attitude and said, with a firm, frowning coldness:

“She may go, if she wishes. But with the knowledge that what prevents her to-day from going beyond the gate of my villa will prevent her to-morrow from returning. And now, will you please to continue your conversation.”

He turned to leave the room. Capolino made an effort to maintain his manly dignity in front of the lady, and addressed his retreating back, with an air almost of defiance, but one that might also be taken for an apology:

“You sent for me, Prince. . . .”

Don Ippolito, who had by this time reached the door, barely turned round, thrusting aside the curtain with his hand:

“Oh, for a matter of no importance,” he said. “Now. . . . Fads! Fancies!”

And he passed out, letting the curtain drop behind him.

“The answer . . . the answer . . .” Donna Adalaide at once broke out, rising to her feet, choking, her eyes swollen and bloodshot with weeping, “I shall wait until to-morrow for his

answer, or for him to come here in person, and tell me that I must stay here till I die, and let myself be trampled underfoot like this. . . .”

“Why of course! Of course! Of course!” Capolino retorted, going towards her. “What do you expect Flaminio to say?”

“He must say it!” she interrupted him, in a frenzy, baring her teeth and clenching her fists. “He must say those words to me, with his own lips; and then yes, then yes, at once! I will do the worst! I am ready! I will do the worst!”

At this moment Liborio, the Prince’s favourite servant, entered the room, alarmed and excited, and halted for a moment in perplexity, seeing the tears and agitation of his mistress.

“Your Excellency. . . . Your Excellency . . .” he said, “Signor Don Salesio . . .”

“What is the matter?” Donna Adelaide inquired angrily. “What does he want?”

“Nothing, Your Excellency . . . he appears to be . . .”

And Liborio raised his hand in a vague gesture of benediction.

“Ah,” said Donna Adelaide at this, fixing Capolino with a hard stare, and continuing to gaze at him frowning and open-mouthed, as though to discover from him whether it was a good or a bad thing that the poor man should choose this particular moment at which to die. “It is better . . . better so!” she then exclaimed, “better so,

poor man. . . . Come, Gnazio, let us go and look at him. . . .”

And she hurried in the wake of Liborio, followed by Capolino, disturbed and worried.

“I have kept him here with me . . .” she said to him as they went, “I have nursed him . . . looked after him. . . . Fine friends you have all been, to desert him like this . . . poor old man. . . . It is the best thing that could happen . . . a merciful relief. . . . Even I have neglected him for the last few days. . . . Murderers! They have dealt him the final blow. . . . He himself though, I must say, did eat too much . . . too many sweet things. . . .”

“Ah, yes, Your Excellency,” sighed Liborio, “I told him so myself . . . too many . . .”

“Pick it up, Gnazio, pick it up. . . . I’ve dropped my handkerchief. Oh Bella Madre Santissima, what a horrible smell!”

And she stopped her nose with her fingers, coming to a standstill at the door of the room in which the poor old man lay dying, supported on his bed by the cook, who had come running in at Liborio’s summons.

Spellbound by an instinctive horror of death, but perhaps even more by repulsion at the extreme thinness of the cartilaginous face, by the colourless hair, the eyeballs already stiffened beneath the half-shut lids, Donna Adelaide and Capolino were standing gazing in, still from the

threshold, when they saw the dying man's mouth open, wider and wider, in a cavernous gape, as though his jaws were being forced apart with cruel violence by an internal spring.

"Oh Lord!" groaned Donna Adelaide. "Why is he doing that?"

She had not finished speaking when something shot out of that open mouth, something horrible.

Donna Adelaide uttered a cry of disgust and raised her hands to shelter her face.

Liborio went over to the bed, and there discovered a grinning set of false teeth.

"It is nothing, Your Excellency!" he said with a pitying smile. "He has taken his last bite . . ."

The cook meanwhile was arranging on the pillow the lifeless head of the poor old man.

CHAPTER VII

“Ye have the poor always with you.”

IN the great echoing hall of the former chancery of the Episcopal Palace, with the fresco on its grimy ceiling covered in dust, its high walls with their yellowing whitewash, loaded with old portraits of prelates, covered also with dust and mildew, scattered about with no regard for symmetry above the blistered, worm-eaten cupboards and bookcases, a buzz of approval rose as soon as Monsignor Montoro, in his beautiful voice, with its measured inflexions, as though suffused with a pure, protecting authority, finished reading to the Cathedral Chapter and a number of other Canons and dignitaries assembled there for the purpose, his pastoral epistle to the reverend fathers of the diocese upon the lamentable events which had plunged Sicily in grief and were distressing every Christian heart.

A verse from Saint Matthew had given Monsignore the text for his pastoral: “*Ye have the poor always with you. . . .*”

It was a freezing, blustering day in January; and more than once, as he read, the Bishop, in ir-

ritation, and his audience as well, had looked anxiously at the tall windows which seemed on the point of yielding, with a crash, to the screaming fury of the southwesterly gale. His calm reading of this gentle homily had had throughout the sinister accompaniment of sharp, shrill hisses, long sorrowful moans, which had often distracted the attention of more than one of his hearers, diffusing throughout the vast hall, watched over by those old portraits, dusty and mildewed, an intense feeling of regret for the vanity of time and life, a vague sense of terror.

Several of them had been looking out, through one of those windows, at the terrace of an old house opposite, upon which a poor lunatic seemed to be tasting some secret joy, that of flight perhaps, exposed to the fury of the wind which sent fluttering round his body the yellow woollen blanket that had been draped over his shoulders: he was laughing with the whole of his wretched face, while his keen, demoniac eyes glistened with a film of tears, and the long locks of his reddish hair floated out on either side of him like flames.

The poor fellow was the younger brother of Canon Batà, who was present in the room, apparently paying the closest attention to what the Bishop was reading, but inwardly absorbed, beyond question, in wholly different thoughts, which had several times found expression in comical gesticulations.

The reading at an end, those of the older Canons who were most familiar with their most excellent Bishop's weakness hastened to surround the table, at which he was seated, to make him repeat, one one, another another, among the many passages with which Monsignore, from the way in which he pronounced them, had seemed to them to be most satisfied and pleased.

"That sentence about Satan's Host, My Lord, how does it go?"

"Your Lordship was alluding to masonry, wasn't he? What was the expression?"

And Monsignore, inwardly overjoyed, but preserving an outward air of weary condescension, letting droop over his clear, oval eyes those eyelids of his as fine as layers of onion-skin, and nodding his head in assent, and raising his hand to bid them wait, looked for the passage and repeated:

"Evil and accursed sect . . . evil and accursed sect, which for its architect has chosen the devil, for its hierophant the Jew. . . ."

"Ah, that was it! For its hierophant the Jew!" they exclaimed. "A stupendous expression, My Lord. Stupendous! . . ."

"Bold . . . daring . . ."

"Great heavens, what a gale!" the Bishop began to complain, distressed, as though it were not the reward that he merited for his pains.

Meanwhile the younger Canons, who had

listened more attentively than any to the reading, were exchanging glances of disgust at these silly old flatterers, or of pained resignation to the reception that the people would give to this windy eloquence, which kept harping upon a question no less cruel than it was fatuous, which the reverend fathers were to transmit to the poor of the diocese: why it was that poverty, which had always existed and would always continue to exist, should only now be disturbing people's minds like this, upsetting social order, and leading to such deplorable excesses.

One or two of these young dignitaries felt that Monsignore might at least have paraphrased, with application to the occurrences in the Island, the recent Encyclical of H.H. Leo XIII, *De conditione opificum*, in which it was laid down that employers of labour must cease from usury, overt or covert, and from treating their workmen as slaves, and from trading upon the need of the poor, instead of shewing such hostility to those who "dared to question the ancient rigour of the Civil Law."

They were all the more distressed by the tone of their Bishop's Pastoral, in that, only the day before, in defence of the poor, Pompeo Agrò had published a fierce pamphlet, in which, after comparing conditions in Sicily to those in Ireland, and drawing attention to the language used and attitude adopted by eminent Catholic prelates,

British and American, towards the economic and social questions of the hour, he had—by way of a challenge—quoted the insolent reply of Fr. MacGlynn, a Catholic priest in New York, to his Bishop's request that he would moderate his revolutionary propaganda: "I have always taught, My Lord, and shall continue to teach, so long as there is breath in my body, that the earth is by right the common property of the people, and that the right of individual property in land is opposed to natural justice, however it be sanctified by civil and religious laws!"

The whole of Agrò's pamphlet was a bitter indictment of the ignorance and sloth of the Sicilian clergy. And here, within twenty-four hours, was their Bishop's pastoral, furnishing the most clear and convincing proof of the charge.

Another group was discussing whether it would not be as well to send, later on, privately, one of the more favoured of the seniors to Monsignore, to point out to him in so many words how inopportune this pastoral was, now that the report was going about that, with the storm raging everywhere, the proclamation of a state of siege throughout Sicily was imminent if not already decreed. A certain general had even been mentioned by name, as appointed Commissioner Extraordinary, with full powers; the same general who, a few days earlier, had landed at Palermo with a whole army corps. It was said that he had be-

gun by arresting the members of the Central Committee of the Fasci, who, the night before, had issued a revolutionary proclamation to the workers of the Island.

"Yes, here it is . . . I have it in my pocket . . . it is quite true!" said one of them, mysteriously. "We can read it in a moment, when we get outside. . . ."

But, to baffle and enhance the eager curiosity of this group, there appeared in the hall at that moment, paler than usual and panting for breath, the Bishop's young secretary, who evidently brought the confirmation of this most serious news.

They all crowded round the table.

"Is it proclaimed?"

"Yes, yes, the state of siege is proclaimed; with orders to disarm the populace."

"To disarm them as well? Good . . . good. . . ."

"And they have arrested the members of the Central Committee of the Fasci, in Palermo."

"All of them?"

"No, not all; some of them managed to escape. Including, it is said, the Prince of Laurentano's son."

"Heavens, what do I hear?" the Bishop groaned. "Yes . . . he was in it too! . . . Escaped? Escaped?"

The report was not confirmed: many people as-

sented that Laurentano had been arrested as well. Anyhow, the whole of Sicily would at once be placed under military occupation, down to the smallest villages, so that the fugitives too would be caught and imprisoned.

"Heavens, what do I hear? What do I hear?" Monsignore continued to exclaim. "But . . . have we really come to this?"

Furtively, from the young cleric's pocket, appeared the Committee's proclamation, which had been distributed broadcast on handbills through all the towns of the Island; it passed from hand to hand round the table; but many of those present did not know what it was, and every one, when he discovered its nature, refused to open it and handed it on to his neighbour, as though the folded, crumpled sheet might burn or soil his hands, until it ended in those of the young secretary, who unfolded it and began to read it aloud in the Bishop's presence, to the speechless dismay of some and amid a running commentary of derision or indignation from the rest.

Treating with the Government on terms of equality, the Committee, in solemn tones, demanded in the name of the workers of Sicily: *the abolition of the local duties on flour* ("Ah! They go as far as that, do they?"); *an inquiry into the administrative services, in which the Fasci should be represented* ("Good for them! That's a clever stroke . . . to be sure!"); *The legal sanction of*

the agrarian and mineral agreements drafted at the congresses of the Socialist Party ("What's that? Legal sanction? Yes, legal! The government stamp!"); the establishment of agricultural and industrial centres, to manage the undeveloped property of private owners and such public property of the State and ecclesiastical tithes as had not yet been alienated (at this a storm of protest broke out, a confused din, over which predominated: "Spoliation!" . . . "Brigands" . . . "They have no right!" while the young secretary held up his hand to appeal for silence, implying that there was more, there was better still to come, and repeated, reading from the sheet: "including . . . including . . .") including the compulsory expropriation of large proprietors, with a temporary concession to the said proprietors of a small annuity ("Oh, they are too kind!" "How considerate!" "What generosity!" "What condescension!"); social legislation for the economic and moral improvement of the proletariat, and then the final bombshell: the inclusion in the national budget of a sum of twenty million lire to provide for the necessary outlay upon the execution of these demands, for the acquisition of the instruments of labour for both the agricultural and the industrial centres, and for the maintenance of their members and the establishment of the centres upon a sound and efficient basis.

"But they are mad! They must be mad!"

Monsignore broke out amid the general hubbub, as he rose from his chair. "Great God! What impudence! But is it confirmed, eh? Is it confirmed that this army corps has arrived? Is it confirmed, eh? This is no laughing matter! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!"

The young secretary hastened to reassure him, then finished reading the proclamation which, in conclusion, recommended calm, *because from isolated and convulsive movements no lasting benefits would accrue*, and warned its readers that the *procedure to be adopted would depend upon the Government's decision*.

But Monsignore, waving aside with both hands, as superfluous, these recommendations and warnings, told his secretary to send the pastoral immediately to the printer, as it would certainly gratify the General in command of the army corps; and dismissed the assembly in order that he might hasten to Colimbètra to comfort the Prince of Laurentano.

With a long and loud flapping of cassocks and cloaks the throng of Canons, buffeted by the wind, stepped down from the high ground of San Gerlando to mix in the hubbub of the town. The madman, on his terrace, was shouting, joyfully, waving his yellow blanket, as though in response to the fluttering of all those black cloaks.

The victims.

As he hastened out to Colimbètra, Monsignor Montoro could certainly never have guessed that sentiments very similar to those which he himself had expressed with so much literary unction in his pastoral were agitating the mind of one of those men whom he had just described as mad.

At his first direct contact with those so-called comrades, at the repercussion, closer at hand and more frequent, of the bloodstained episodes of that popular rising which, even if widespread poverty, intolerable burdens, cruelties and tyrannies of every sort gave it ample justification, could not by any chance take shape and grow and predominate, lacking as it did a soul really conscious of its own strength and of its own rights, Lando Laurentano had found himself called upon by his friends in Sicily to answer, if not for a deliberate crime, since he could not but believe in their sincerity, certainly for a colossal piece of folly. Always arising from that external infatuation, due perhaps in great measure to the temperature of the soil: an infatuation which gave so theatrical an air, in voice and gesture, to the life of his fellow-islanders, and for which he—in his deliberate stiffness—had always felt such bitter contempt!

How could his friends have deceived themselves into thinking that they would succeed in a few

months, by their preaching, in breaking that hard, agelong shell of stupidity fortified by distrust and bestial cunning, which encrusted the minds of the peasants and sulphur workers of Sicily? How could they have believed in the possibility of class warfare, when all connexion and solidarity of principles, sentiments and intentions, nay, even the most rudimentary culture, any kind of consciousness were lacking?

The whole of their tactics, from beginning to end, were mistaken. It was not class warfare, impossible in the prevailing conditions, but rather a coalition of classes that was the object to be secured, since in every grade of society in Sicily there survived a deep-rooted resentment of the Italian Government, for its contemptuous indifference to the Island ever since 1860.

True that on the one hand feudal customs, the habit of treating the peasants as beasts of burden, and avarice and usury, and on the other the peasants' fierce and inveterate hatred of the gentry and absolute want of faith in the administration of justice, stood out as insuperable obstacles to the formation of any such coalition. But desperate as the attempt might appear, was that other revealed now as any less desperate which his friends had chosen to make, acting upon the principle, unconsciously and disastrously, of the inertia of the Government, which encouraged people to take risks?

The Government, plunged neck-deep at that moment, up in Rome, in the morass of the bank scandal, relying, down in Sicily, upon a policy either inept or arrogant and overbearing, without a thought for the evils that for so many years had afflicted the Island, without respect either for the law or for the liberty of the subject, had, by inertia or by provocation, favoured or stimulated the formation of those proletarian associations which, if they had promptly secured some improvement, however slight, of the conditions of labour on the land and in the pits, or if they had not been incited by bloodshed, would soon, without any doubt, have dissolved of their own accord, lacking as they did any unifying sentiment, any leaven of conscience, any trace of an ideal.

So much Lando Laurentano had realized now, when it was too late, on the spot; and the embittered spirit in which he had come in response to their invitation had remained crushed by a stupefaction filled with dark misgivings, as though his friends had stuffed his mouth with tow when it was burning with thirst.

Roused to action by the urgent necessity of finding some place of refuge under the lowering menace of a violent, crushing repression on the part of the Government, he had indignantly opposed the counsels of prudence advanced by his friends, who were bewildered and terrified by the extreme gravity of the situation. Prudence? Now that,

every few days, in the small villages of the interior, at Giardinello, for instance, with barely eight hundred inhabitants, and at Lercara, Pietraperzia, Gibellina, Marinò, the people were leaving their homes and herding together on the village greens, with no common plan, under no banner save the portraits of the King and Queen, with no weapon save a cross borne by some tattered, frenzied woman at the head of the procession, and marching blindly upon the rifles of a score of soldiers, who were impelled principally by the fear of being trampled underfoot to open fire spontaneously, without waiting for the word of command? True, no one had suggested to them these processions that ended in massacres; but for these and for all the other rash actions, and for the blood of the butchered victims, somebody must now answer, if only because these blind herds had been considered fit and ripe to welcome the demonstration of their rights. How could anyone draw back now, and counsel prudence? No, there was no other way of escape left now save in the final outbreak of that madness: the promoters must immolate themselves with their victims!

And Lando Laurentano had scornfully declined to append his signature to that manifesto of the Central Committee to the workers of the Island, which in the solemnity of its peremptory tone had struck him as positively ridiculous, because not so much of the terms and conditions it offered to the

Government as of the entire absence of any real consciousness and strength in the people in whose name it offered them. The only real factor was the desperation of all those unfortunate creatures, condemned by their ignorance to a life of perpetual hardship; and the blood, the blood, the blood of the victims.

When the state of siege was proclaimed, Lino Apes had had to drag him off by main force into hiding. He had fled, not for the reasons which Apes in the excitement of the moment had shouted at him, but owing to his invincible repugnance to the idea of figuring as an apostle or a hero or a martyr, exposed in the dock of a military court to the wondering curiosity of the ladies of the Palermitan aristocracy who were known to him personally.

As companions in flight, in addition to Apes, he had had Bruno, Ingrão and Cataldo Sclàfani, all three in disguise.

How he had laughed, a laugh in which contempt mingled with pity, how degraded he had felt at the same time, and how disgusted, at the unrecognizable appearance of the last named, shorn of that quickset hedge which used to cover his cheeks and chin! It seemed as though his eyes and voice did not yet know of the loss, and they created a ridiculous effect of helplessness in their expressions, in which the beard that was now lacking had played so great a part. But this disguise did

not, as a matter of fact, indicate any fear in any of the three; it was so to speak imposed on them by the part which the necessity of flight assigned to them at that moment; while there entered into it also, and to no small extent, the fatuous pride of the Islander in his racial cunning in escaping from the tyranny of constituted authority.

They had retired into the interior of the Island, fleeing before the troops who were preparing to invade the other Provinces from Palermo. If they should succeed in crossing it from end to end, they would take shelter at Valsania, and from there would take ship for Malta or 'Tunis. Lando would be glad to seek a haven in Malta, the scene of his grandfather's exile, not because he ventured to compare his own lot with his grandfather's but because he had intended for some time past to visit Burmula and trace, if possible, the spot where his grandfather was buried, with the help of Mauro Mortara's description, which, it must be admitted, was none too definite, since the burial had occurred amid the confusion of the great pestilence in Malta in 1852.

In vain had Lino Apes, taking as his text the incidents and discomforts of their headlong flight, now on foot, now in springless carts, now in broken-down carriages, up hill and down dale, in search of food and shelter, tried to prove to his friends that, after all, what they were doing was not such a serious matter that a man could not

laugh at it if he chose. Was the rending of their illusions, for instance, a sufficient reason for him to attach no importance to the rent he had made in his trousers, in climbing down from a cart? They were older than Tiberius Gracchus, those illusions; whereas his trousers were new! Where had Cataldo Sclàfani left the clippings of his magnificent beard? A hair of that beard—he reflected philosophically—would have been the ideal thing for darning his trousers! The dreary aspect of the scenery, in its wintry desolation, the depressing effect of a laborious journey over a doubtful track, their eagerness to obtain news wherever they might of all that had happened since their flight began, made the subtleties of Lino Apes fall flat, arousing no echoing laugh.

The impressions that he managed to gather piecemeal, as they went farther and farther inland, of these exceptional measures that the Government had suddenly adopted, strengthened Lando's conviction that his friends had made a mistake. The old, profound discontent of the Sicilian people had in a moment changed everywhere to the most fiery indignation: even although the higher ranks of society had been alarmed at first by the popular agitation, now, in the face of this military aggression, of these armed forces with their air of an invading enemy, abolishing all law for everybody and suppressing every constitutional guarantee, they felt inclined, if not actually

to fraternize with the lower orders, if not to make excuses for them, at any rate to admit that when all was said, they, up till then, had invariably had the worst of every encounter, nor had there ever yet been an armed rising, and that if they had been carried away to occasional excesses, these had been cruelly and stupidly provoked by the massacres. The native pride, common to all the Islanders, rebelled against this fresh insult which the Italian Government was inflicting upon Sicily, instead of making belated reparation for ancient wrongs; and everywhere there was a shudder of loathing at the reports that kept coming in, of towns surrounded by regiments of infantry, squadrons of cavalry, to arrest and carry off by hundreds, without any discrimination, rich and poor, students and workmen, town councillors here, schoolmasters and town clerks there, and women and old men and even little children; the suppression of newspapers; the subjection of private correspondence even to censors; the whole Island cut adrift from the rest of the community and handed over, bound and disarmed, to the mercies of a military dictatorship.

As a stubborn horse, driven against his will away from the obstacles that he was ready to jump, of a sudden, in a frenzied panic, takes fright and rears and backs, quivering in every muscle, so Lando Laurentano, swept by the vehemence of this general indignation, at a certain

point had stopped, feeling himself suffocated by shame at his flight. Was this the time to flee? To desert the field of battle? The ground was burning under his feet; the air was all aflame. Was it possible that the Island, astir from end to end, would allow itself to be crushed, to be trampled underfoot like this, without rising in the exasperation of the hatred so long repressed and now so brutally provoked? A single rallying cry perhaps was enough! Enough perhaps that one man should step forward!

When he reached Imera, and heard that in a village close at hand, Santa Caterina Villarmosa, the populace had risen, Lando could contain himself no longer; and, notwithstanding that his friends did everything in their power to restrain him, shouting to him that there was nothing more that could be attempted, or hoped, and that he would simply be thrusting his head into the jaws of authority, he determined to go there.

Only Lino Apes accompanied him, and that in the hope of chilling his ardour and arresting him half way, assuming for the occasion, as best he might, the part of Sancho Panza, so that his friend, whom he knew to be sensitive to ridicule, might see himself as Don Quixote. And sure enough, very soon, the giants whom Lando in his excitement had imagined he saw embodied in those villagers of Santa Caterina Villarmosa, rising in defiance of the state of siege that had been pro-

claimed, revealed themselves to be merely wind-mills.

As they drew near to the village, they found that nobody there knew anything yet about the proclamation: a bill had been posted on the walls, but the ignorant folk had made nothing of it; and, in their ignorance, as usual, as elsewhere, with the portraits of the King and Queen, with a crucifix at the head of their procession, shouting: "Long live the King! Down with the taxes!" had proceeded to parade the village streets, until, turning out of the market place and into a narrow lane that debouched upon it, they had come upon eight soldiers and four carabinieri lying in wait for them. The officer in command (it was not for nothing that he was named Colleoni) had chosen this position with masterly strategy, so that the unarmed crowd, packed into this trap, should, when ordered to disband, find themselves unable to move; and there not once, but repeatedly, had given the command to fire upon them. There were eleven killed, and any number wounded, including women, old men and infants. Now, everything was quiet, quiet as the grave. Only, here and there, the cries of relatives, mourning for their dead, and the groans of the wounded.

"Have you had enough?" Lino Apes asked Lando.

The other turned to the old peasant who had given them these details and who, in comparing

the village to a graveyard, had pointed to a hill close by, crowned by a few cypresses; and inquired:

“Are they there?”

The old peasant, his eyes keen with hatred and big with pity, nodded his head several times, then held out the fingers of his earth-stained, misshapen hands, to indicate first ten and then one more; and, by the look in his eyes and the silence that followed this mute statement, made it clear that he had seen them.

Lando turned towards the hill.

“I see!” sighed Lino Apes. “Now I change to Horatio. . . . Scene two: Hamlet in the graveyard.”

In the dreary little hilltop cemetery, save for its shivering sexton, who wore a light woollen shawl over his shoulders, there was no one to be seen. Seated upon a stool, to the left of the gate, he was gazing apathetically, in the desolate silence, at the coffins drawn up on the ground in front of him, like a shepherd watching his flock. He was expecting a visit from the judicial authorities, and orders for the burial. Seeing two strangers enter, he turned, then quickly rose and took off his cap, supposing them to be the magistrate and chief constable. Lino Apes described himself and his companion as journalists, and Lando asked him to let them see one or two of the bodies.

The custodian thereupon bent down over one of

the coffins, which was bigger than the rest, old, painted grey, with two bands of crape crossed over it, and removed a heavy stone that was holding down the lid.

Two bodies, in this coffin, one upon the other: one with its face beneath the other's feet.

The one above was that of a boy. His legs were stretched apart; his head sunk between his companion's feet. In this inverted posture, he seemed to be protesting: "No! No!" with the whole of his lifeless little face, in which the eyes had not quite shut, still contracted in the agony of death. No, to such a death; no, to such horror; no, to that coffin for two, tainted by that crude and acrid stench of the slaughter-house.

But more appalling still was the face of the other, between the worn boots of the boy, with its great black eyes staring wide and a tawny shadow of beard beneath its chin. It was the body of a peasant in the prime of life. With those terrible eyes staring at the sky, from the supine body, it cried for vengeance for this final atrocity, the heaping of that other body upon itself.

"See, Lord," it seemed to be saying, "see what they have done!"

Neither Lando nor Apes was capable of uttering a word; and the sexton replaced the lid of the coffin and laid the heavy stone upon it.

After various other coffins, wretched things of unstained firwood, they came to one covered in a

bright sky-blue cloth, a tiny coffin, so tiny that Lando in his uncertainty felt the hope rise that this at least was not connected with the massacre. He glanced at the sexton, who had stopped in front of it, and from the way in which he was gazing at it knew that, yes, this one too . . . this one too. . . . He put the question, and the sexton, after nodding his head for a moment, answered:

“*Una ’nnucenti. . . .*” (A little girl.)

“Can we see her?”

Lino Apes, revolted and horrified, protested:

“No, let it be, Lando! Don’t you see? The coffin has been nailed down. . . .”

“Oh, if that’s all . . .” said the sexton, producing an iron wedge from his pocket. “I shall have to open it for the magistrate. It’s quite easy. . . .”

And he bent down to unfasten the flimsy lid, taking care not to damage the blue cloth. The nails slipped gently out of the soft wood, at each thrust of the wedge.

When the little coffin lay open, they saw inside it the child not yet rigid in death, her cheeks still blooming, her curly little head turned slightly to one side and her arms stretched out by her sides. But her rosy lips were wet with slaver, and from her nose trickled a bloody froth, still bubbling, at what seemed to be the regular intervals of respiration.

“But she is alive!” exclaimed Lando, with a shudder.

The sexton smiled bitterly:

“Alive?” and he replaced the lid.

Would that mother have allowed her to set out alive on her last journey, who had combed and dressed her like that, who had so lovingly adorned the little coffin in that bright blue cloth?

“This is what they have done . . .” Lando murmured.

And Lino Apes and the sexton supposed that he was referring to the soldiers, who had killed the poor little girl.

Lando Laurentano was, however, referring to his own comrades, and saw in his mind’s eye no longer the image of the little one, who had at least had the benefit of a mother’s pitying care, but the terrible image of that other, adult victim, with the boots of another corpse over his face, and his eyes wide open, filled with a measureless anguish, staring at the sky.

There is still hope.

In the old De Vincentis palazzo, its outer walls blackened by time and scarred everywhere like a ruin, its balconies and broad terrace carpeted with moss, behind their rusty railings, but inside, in the huge reception-rooms, full of light and peace, with those waxen saints and flowers beneath bells

of crystal, which seemed to 'diffuse a monastic odour throughout, the silence, stamped upon the tiled floors by the rectangular patches of sunlight from the windows, which grew slowly longer and longer as the sun declined, followed by the slow, light swarming of motes in the sunbeams, was broken by a heavy, rhythmical sound of footsteps.

For the last week Vincente De Vincentis, oblivious of the Arabic manuscripts in the Itria library, had confined himself to one room, wrapped in an old and faded shepherd's cloak, with its collar turned up, pacing the floor from morning to night, his clawlike hands gripping each other behind his back, his head drooping and his eyes heavy with want of sleep, almost sightless, for in the house he never wore his glasses.

In the next room, by the glass door of the balcony, sat knitting, with a grey woollen shawl over her shoulders, and a black muffler, of wool also, round her head, tied beneath her chin, herself as soft and fleecy as a bale of wool, Donna Fana, the old housekeeper. Sitting half within the rectangle of sunshine, she seemed to be evaporating in the light, and the fluff of her woollen shawl, catching the sun, sparkled with the hovering motes in the beam.

Donna Fana had laid in their coffins with her own hands, first of all her master, who had died young, then her mistress, to whom she had been less a servant than a friend and counsellor, and

had seen come into the world and cradled in her arms her two young masters, entrusted now to her sole charge. As a girl, she had been a lay sister in the convent of San Vincenzo, and had remained "without the world," as she put it, a sort of domestic nun. From time to time she would heave, as in the convent, a burning sigh, followed by the inevitable exclamation:

"If I were there!"

But there was no one now to ask her, as was the custom among the nuns: "Where, sister?" so that she might answer with a second sigh:

"Sister, among the blessed angels!"

But, truly, in the peace of the angels she had always dwelt, in that house. The mistress: a true saint, innocent as a child even when she was a grown woman, incapable of thinking evil, and entirely devoted to religion and good works; those two boys: they too, each of them more virtuous than the other, well brought up in the fear of God.

Now, could the Lord ever abandon such a house, and let it go to ruin?

Donna Fana seemed to have an intimate knowledge of all God's wishes; and used to speak of Paradise as though she were already there, and were going on with her knitting beneath the eyes of the Eternal Father, as to Whom she could say where and how He was seated, with Jesus, Our Saviour, and Our Dear Lady. Years back, she

had made ready the body linen and the robe and the cloth slippers and the silken kerchief in which to appear at the Last Judgment, confident that the Supreme Judge would number her among the elect, coming there so clean and neat; and every night she offered a special prayer to Saint Brigid, who was to announce to her in a vision, three days beforehand, the precise hour of her death, so that she might be ready and have received the sacraments.

And so there was nothing now that could distress her; and to her all this consternation shown by Vincente (whom she called Don Tinuzzo) was merely childish. She was confirmed in this opinion, not merely by her faith in God, but by her unassailable belief that the prosperity of the house could never come to an end. And she continued to manage the house with the time-honoured abundance, so that all the old pauper women of the neighbourhood came in after dinner to divide what was unused and the broken meats from the table, as had been their custom for so many years; and to lay in a store of all God's bounties, and to prepare with her own hands for her young masters the traditional cordials and sweetmeats, which she had learned to make at the convent, the *cùscusu* of rice and pistacchi, the sweet fish of almond paste, the pine-kernel cakes, and all the preserves and quince jellies and fruits in syrup.

Perhaps it was true that Don Jaco Pacia, the agent, pocketed a little on the sly.

“But what of that?” she would inquire of Ninì, after a furious outburst from his elder brother. “Crumbs, my son, crumbs!”

He a son of the Church too, Don Jaco Pacia, was it possible that he could be such a persistent robber as Don Tinuzzo made out? Did not Don Jaco continue to give her the same regular allowance for the housekeeping that he had always given her, without ever making the slightest comment? The entire control of the money was in his hands; why! the only thing was to turn a blind eye, if a trifle of it did stick to his fingers.

Donna Fana defended him, with a clear conscience, because she believed that she had a proof of the honesty of Pacia's thoughts and actions in the fact that, in the year when Don Jaco had gone to Rome, he had brought her back a blessed rosary and a snuff-box with the Holy Father's portrait.

Had she only known that, on this very day, Don Jaco, in order to raise money, in addition to the surrender of the lands of Milione to Don Flaminio Salvo, was coming to suggest a mortgage upon the palazzo itself, in which she sat so peacefully over her knitting.

This last bombshell, as a matter of fact, not even Vincente expected. Apart from the transfer of the land, he was preoccupied by another serious

matter, which had given him no rest for two days, but one of a very different nature.

He had discovered in the corner of a room in which all the lumber was stowed away, an old gun, a flint-lock, smothered in rust and dust. Now that a state of siege and a disarming order had been proclaimed throughout Sicily, was it not his bounden duty to hand over this weapon?

Ninì and Donna Fana said no; Ninì even maintained that it would be regarded not merely as an impertinence but as an outrageous contempt of authority to surrender such a firearm as that. But what did they know about it? On what grounds did they say so? Like that, out of their heads! The order to hand over all arms, without exception, was positive and peremptory. Was this an arm, or was it not? Old it might be, indeed it was old and devoured by rust, but it was still an arm! Perhaps, too, it was loaded, and might go off at any moment. . . . You could see the flint; and the steel, there it was, hanging by a chain. . . .”

“Very well, then, take it and hand it over!” Ninì had shouted at him, with a shrug of his shoulders, the day before, Ninì who had something far more important on his mind at the moment, in his rare appearances in the house, completely upset and impatient to return to his torment, by the side of Dianella.

He, Vincente, had proposed that Ninì should waste half the day, in the state of mind in which

he was, in seeking information about the weapon. It was easy to say, take it! What if it went off? Hand it over, then, to whom, where? At the Prefecture? At the Town Hall? At the Police Station? He knew nothing about it, and if he were to go and inquire . . . like that, with a pretence of curiosity, there was the risk of his giving rise to suspicion and matters ending in a search of the house.

The state of siege had thrown, and was keeping Vincente De Vincentis in such a state of terror that he saw the most terrible threats and dangers everywhere. He had decided not to stir from the house, for as long as the ban should last. But what if, with Donna Fana's cursed habit of proclaiming aloud to the whole neighbourhood every trifling incident that occurred in the family, the police should come to hear about this weapon?

Suddenly, the old housekeeper saw him dash in frantic haste from the room in which he had shut himself up, waving his arms in the air and shouting:

"Let it go off! Let it kill me! I don't care a damn! I am going to take it, I am going to take it myself!"

"For heaven's sake, leave it alone, Don Tinuzzo!" exclaimed Donna Fana, running after him. "Don't let him, God, in that state. . . . You see how he's trembling all over? Leave it

alone! I shall call somebody from the balcony.
. . .”

“Call whom? Don’t you dare . . .” Vincente had begun to shout at her, his face purple, when from the front door, which always stood open in the daytime, there appeared Don Jaco Pacia, with his habitual air of a saint who had dropped from heaven into a world of sorrow and confusion, to which presently, quietly, with the help of God, he would restore order and peace.

He was long and dry, like a figure carved in wood, with a sad face, marked with the hard mourning band of his black eyebrows, a pair of circumflex accents, in contrast to the broad, foolish, blissful smile beneath his bushy white moustaches. His eyelids, straight like those of a Japanese, did not reveal the whites of his eyes, which remained opaque, as though indifferent to the hardness of those two circumflex accents and the foolish blissfulness of his eternal smile. With his arms always folded upon his breast and his big, unwashen, bony hands he would assume an attitude of resigned humility.

Having heard what the trouble was, he took into his own hands the affair of the gun, and said that Don Tinuzzo had not one but a hundred reasons for his alarm. Certainly, it was an arm! And, Heaven help us all, at a time like this. . . . A terrible time for the whole of Sicily! But he was here, he was here, on the spot, to look after his

two dear boys, and, with the help of God, there was nothing to fear, in that direction! The trouble, the serious trouble, lay in another.

And he began to describe all the trouble he had had in tracing the title-deeds of the estate of Milione, first of all at the Record Office, then in the Chancery of the Law-courts and in the Diocesan Chancery, to find out all the dues, great and small, with which the said estate was burdened. Now the deeds were ready and in order at the lawyer's; but Don Flaminio Salvo was declining to pay the costs of the sale, and perhaps, from his own point of view, he was right, since, after all, he was doing a great favour . . . a banker like him . . .

"Oh indeed, a great favour? A great favour?" Vincente broke out in a fury. "Like Primosole, I suppose? A great favour!"

Don Jaco allowed him to finish, in one of his typical attitudes of holy martyrdom; then said:

"But you must have patience, my dear Don Tinuzzo! Has Don Flaminio other children, then, besides the daughter who is already promised to your brother Don Ninì? Holy God, don't you see it is a pure formality? In a day or two they will be married, and it will all come back here in the end!"

"All, eh? Beautiful . . . easy . . . smooth as oil . . ." Vincente ejaculated, with furious jerks of his head. "The marriage of two lunatics! But

if that is so, why does Don Flaminio refuse to pay the cost of the transfer? A proof that he doesn't believe it! Who says that this marriage is going to come off? Who says . . ."

"Don Tinuzzo!" the other interrupted him. "Has your brother Don Ninì been received, or has he not, into Salvo's household? Or am I inventing it? Holy Name of God! He has been there for days on end, hasn't he? Well, what does that mean? It means that the girl is there! And you say that if the straw is kept by the fire . . . Anyhow, here comes Don Ninì himself. . . . He can tell you better than anyone."

Vincente hastened towards his brother as he entered the room; went close up to him, trembling with excitement; gripped both his arms in his clawlike hands, and tilted his crimson face sideways to make a close scrutiny of his brother's face, with his peering eyes. Then:

"Yes! Just look at him!" he sneered, stepping back and pointing to his brother. "Do you see his face! He looks like a corpse, your bridegroom!"

Ninì, taken thus by assault, stood there in the middle of the room staring at his brother and Don Jaco and Donna Fana, as though he had lost his senses.

There was indeed depicted on his face, which as a rule expressed the gentle, courteous goodness of his nature, a troubled anguish, and his beautiful,

dark, velvety eyes were tense with a black grief, unconscious though they seemed.

When he learned what was required of him and with what object, he drew himself up stiffly, waving his arms, with an expression of disgust. Don Jaco on one side of him, Donna Fana on the other, tried to calm him, to question him politely; but in vain: he wriggled from their grasp, shaking his head, a stifled cry in his throat.

“But do at least tell us if there is any hope, to set your brother’s mind at rest!” Don Jaco cried to him finally, with clasped hands.

Ninì gazed at him with a strange glare in his eyes. If there was no longer any hope of calling Dianella back to sanity, to life, what would he care about the ruin of his house, poverty, anything? Was it really possible that anyone could hope for Dianella’s recovery, only for this, to save the house from ruin? That all his labour, his torment should, to these people, be serving this purpose? Yes, they were forcing him to fling his hope at them as a sop to placate their fear of poverty! Very well, then, yes, there was still hope, there was, there was. . . .

And Ninì, burying his face in his hands, burst out crying in shrill convulsive sobs.

Tearing up. . . .

Flaminio Salvo had with great difficulty deciphered the letter he had received from his sister

Adelaide, whose handwriting, apart from the vagaries of her spelling, almost always illegible, this time suggested more than ever the furious scratchings of a hen.

It was all one long cry for help and threat of disaster, this letter, punctuated with imprecations and exclamations of despair. He had replied briefly and soothingly, telling her that he would soon be coming to pay her a visit at Colimbètra, and that in the meantime she must keep calm, as befitted a lady of her age and station.

A cold smile had hovered on his lips as he glanced, after perusing it, at this sheet of paper, which was still seeking to annoy him. Gently folding it up again he had begun to tear it slowly, along and across, into smaller and smaller fragments, without thinking of what he was doing, fallen into a profound abstraction of frowning gloom; finally, he had looked down at the result of his handiwork on the writing table: all that heap of tiny scraps of paper.

Who could say whether the sheet of paper had not been suffering, at being torn up like that, reduced to all those little scraps. . . .

He had been left with a burning sensation in the balls of his forefinger and thumb, which had grown heated in this work of destruction, without his knowing it; of their own accord, from a lust for destruction.

Ah, to be able to tear to shreds, like that, with-

out thinking, life as a whole: to fold it in four, like a sheet of paper soiled with stupid writing, and tear it along and across, ten, twenty, thirty times, piece by piece, slowly.

With a groan he had scattered over the writing table and floor all those scraps of paper, and had risen from his chair.

Looking out from the balcony window at the familiar, unchanging expanse of country; at the two breakwaters of Porto Empedocle in the distance, stretching out to sea, down there, like a pair of arms; at the dark blots made by steamers at anchor, and picturing to himself the industry of all those people down there in his service, loading the sulphur from his pits, heaped up on the beach, he had felt himself stifled by all the worries, all the thought that for years past had been inflicted upon him by that industry, which now was superfluous to him, necessary to so many, who derived from it the means of providing for their wretched daily needs, and of facing the hardships, the griefs that were interwoven with their lives and the life of every man. And it had occurred to him that he, a satiated and exhausted man, with the nausea of satiety and the helplessness of exhaustion, remained there, as though pinned to the ground, to let himself be devoured by all those restless, hungry creatures, none of whom mattered to him in the least degree. But could he possibly have prevented this? His work, the

work of his whole lifetime, had assumed a bodily form outside himself, and lay there for the benefit of others. Could that expanse of country prevent a multitude of men from breaking its surface with hoe and plough, planting trees in it and gathering their fruit? So it was now with him. And, like the earth, he felt no joy in the work that other people were doing upon him to gather his fruit; nor could they, however much they walked over him, bear him company, penetrate, break his solitude, which had acquired the insensibility of stone.

He felt only an immense boredom with everything, which crushed in him the will to liberate himself, and was now capable only of moving his fingers, unconsciously, as they had moved just now, to do harm to a sheet of paper. But everything, now, for him, had the value of that sheet of paper; and he must allow his fingers, his fingers at least to do something, of their own accord, since his boredom set them in motion. Had they turned savagely upon himself, he would have allowed them to tear him, in the same way. . . .

Was that really so? And was he not pretending the unconsciousness of his fingers when they tore up his sister's letter, so as to be able to assure himself that it was *in the same way* that he had torn up, after his return to Girgenti, certain other letters, as soon as he caught sight of them in the drawers of the writing table, or in the pigeonholes

in front of him? Certain letters that bore the signature of Nicoletta Capolino?

Actually, no: the images of Aurelio Costa and Nicoletta Capolino had never come and planted themselves in front of him, so that he might repel them with a *logical* smile, furnishing his reasons and pointing out to them the reasons that they required, if they wished to persecute him with remorse. Their persecution was more irritating than any other, because it was not apparent. It was not apparent, for this reason, as plain and solid and weighty as a tombstone: that they themselves, he in his own blindness, she from a personal motive of her own, had deliberately sought their death.

And yet. . . . And yet, beneath this reason, which buried them, which rendered them invisible to him, they, in a manner which he found himself unable to define, were . . . not present, no, never that; rather continuously absent: but by their very absence, yes, that was it, they were persecuting him. They were both of them there, with Diannella, in the absence of her reason. He did not see them, but yet he could feel them in the meaningless words, in the vacuous gaze and smile of his daughter. And then, to him too, irresistibly, as though from his bowels wrung with exasperation, there came to his lips words devoid of meaning, unprompted by anything; strange vague words, which altered his face to suit each of the

various expressions that they contained in themselves, on their own account, absolutely detached from his consciousness and bearing no relation to his actual state.

And so, to-day, to carry on the fiction of his unconsciousness, after tearing up his sister's letter, he had gone on to utter, *in the same way*, inconsequent words:

"What will serve . . . what will serve . . ."

Except that, after a while, he had given a rational cloak to the fiction, which struck even him as too obvious:

"What will serve . . . yes. I have to light a cigar? I am served by a match. Here is the cigar . . . there is the match: in themselves, two separate things; but made to satisfy my desire to smoke. First one, then the other, I light them and destroy them. . . . To think of all the matches I have struck in my life! Too many. . . . 'And all my work has gone up in smoke! A pity, because I have not attained my object . . . but I wanted a good marriage for my daughter, so as at least to set a crown . . . yes! a princely crown . . . upon all my labours and struggles. A princely crown! . . . Smoke? Vanity? Ah, but that compensation at least for the death of my little boy! Vanity, of course it was, if fate chose to deprive me of all reason for thinking of more serious matters, and left me with one poor girl, with the shadow of her mother's madness brood-

ing over her. And now . . . now . . . I suppose I am serving to satisfy somebody's desire to smoke. . . ."

Why, of course, yes: had he not opened the door of his house to that stupid, harmless fellow De Vincentis? And had left his daughter alone with him: like that, to try the experiment! And if he should cure her, with those handsome, almond-shaped, velvety eyes, with his gentle, ladylike ways, why, Don Jaco Pacia, sitting at this very writing table, as lord and master, would in a few years have consumed in smoke all his bank notes, and his securities, and sulphur pits and land and houses and factories.

"What will serve . . . what will serve . . ."

This complaint from his sister Adelaide, however, no, it really was too much. What did she want from him? Was she not well enough off where she was? There were thorns? Oh, my dear woman! And she expected him to produce the roses? With all those "troops" providing an escort for her; with those portraits of the Bourbon Kings there to protect her, why, she ought to be happy and contented. . . . If only he had been in her place!

Now that he had failed in everything, the mere thought of seeing Don Ippolito again, and of talking to him, had become insufferably oppressive. How was he to endure, in the stark nakedness of his desolate spirit, without a shred of illusion left

to cover it, the sight of that man so carefully composed and dressed up and adorned with the trappings of nobility? It seemed to him now incredible that he could have given a moment's serious thought to such a way of attaining his object. . . . Poor Adelaide! She had been the one to suffer. . . . Still, after all! The villa was most comfortable, and the surroundings were charming; with a little patience and good will, she would be able to put up with the boredom of a man who was not precisely her natural affinity. . . .

It was in this frame of mind that he went down, two days later, to Colimbètra.

The smile that rose to his lips as he passed through the gate, at the salute from the men on guard, still in military attire, though no longer armed, did not fade from them once during the whole of his visit.

With a smile he listened, beneath the columns of the porch, to the reply vouchsafed by Captain Sciaralla, that the fire-arms, no Sir, had not been handed over to the authorities, but had been put away for safety; with a smile he received Liborio's invitation to take a seat in the drawing-room, and, a moment later, the whirlwind inrush of his sister Adelaide and her first breathless questions, broken by sobs, as to Dianella.

"Mah . . . she is taking a love-cure," was his answer.

And he smiled at his sister's almost ferocious astonishment at this calm reply.

"You laugh? . . . Then she may be cured?"

"Cured. . . . Let us hope so! She is having good treatment. . . ."

He smiled even more at the reproaches which Donna Adelaide heaped upon him in an aggressive outburst, and then at her description of all her troubles, all her sufferings and ill treatment, which she called "having her face trampled upon," on the part of her husband.

"Beware, Flaminio!" his sister adjured him at one point, seeing him still smile like that. "Beware! I am going to do something mad!"

He looked at her for a moment, and then spread out his arms.

"But why? If you don't mind my saying so, you look the picture of health!"

At this retort, his sister fled from the room, as though to put her threat into effect without a moment's delay.

And then, as he waited for the Prince to enter, for the second scene, he smiled at the portraits of the two Kings of Naples and Sicily, who were gazing down at him with the most serious expressions from the wall of the room.

Don Ippolito, with a clouded countenance, and inwardly in great anxiety as to the fate of his son, of whom he had heard nothing more, entered

the room, equally disinclined for this encounter, from which the only good result that he could promise himself would certainly be obtained at the cost of a scandal, after the nauseating unpleasantness of vulgar explanations. But his face cleared at the sight of the smile upon his brother-in-law's lips. He interpreted it as meaning that two men, like themselves, could not and should not attach any importance to the ready tears, to the momentary impulses of a woman, whom their manly generosity could and should instinctively pity.

And so Don Ippolito smiled too, but a melancholy smile, as he shook his brother-in-law's hand; and, continuing to smile, spoke to him soothingly, and in that tone of masculine superiority, of his regret at the differences that had arisen between his wife and himself, because it was taking a long time . . . oh, a long time, alas, to bring their respective sentiments and thoughts into harmony, since she refused to understand the reasons for which . . .”

“But really, Prince!” Salvo tried to interrupt him.

“No, no,” Don Ippolito insisted. “Because I highly appreciate the sentiment that has moved her to ask me for what I cannot allow her. I sympathize, believe me, with all my heart, in your tragedy, and . . .”

“But, I tell you, it would be useless, everything

else apart, for her to be there!" said Salvo, to make an end of the matter.

And greatly to the relief of each, they began to discuss another subject, namely the serious events of the day. Except that, then, the Prince was disconcerted by seeing that the smile still remained upon his brother-in-law's lips, while he was so heatedly expressing his indignation, whether at the outrageous measures adopted by the Government, or at the arrogance of the populace. What would have been his stupefaction if, suddenly breaking off the conversation and asking Flaminio Salvo why he went on smiling in that way, he had received the answer:

"Why? . . . Ah. . . . Because at this moment I am thinking that Colimbètra enjoys, among others, the great convenience of being close to the cemetery, so that you, presently, when you die, will have the signal advantage of being buried a few yards away, without having to go through the town, even in your coffin."

But he remembered that the Prince had built, in his own grounds, and actually in the grove of oranges and pomegranates from which the estate took its name, a mausoleum comparable to that of Theron, and he felt a keen curiosity to go out and see it. As soon as he had a chance, he cut short this conversation also and suggested to his brother-in-law that they should take a stroll in the grove.

Donna Adelaide took advantage of this opportunity to send Pertichino post haste to Girgenti to deliver a note to the Honourable Deputy Ignazio Capolino: *S.P.M. (sue pregiatissime mani)*.

When, as night was falling, Flaminio Salvo returned home, upon his opening the door of the room in which Dianella spent most of her time, watched by her old housekeeper and by a trained nurse, he had the surprise of finding his daughter with her arms round the neck of Ninì De Vincentis, her eyes, which were just visible over the young man's shoulder, sparkling with happiness, beneath her unkempt hair, and her hands clasped tightly in the embrace.

"Dianella . . . Dianella . . ." he called to her, with a note of anxiety in his voice, hoping to learn that she was cured.

But Ninì De Vincentis, turning his head with an effort and revealing a face convulsed with bitter anguish, answered him despairingly:

"She calls me Aurelio. . . ."

CHAPTER VIII

The logic of the medals.

ON his return from that pilgrimage to Rome from which he had promised himself that he would bring back to Valsanìa so joyous an illumination of glorious dreams for his declining days, Mauro Mortara, after his visit to Donna Caterina Laurentano on her deathbed, moving with lowered head, without even venturing to glance to right or left, as though he were afraid of being laughed at by the trees, to which for years past he had talked of his adventures, of the greatness and power that had accrued to the country from the work of his old comrades in conspiracy, in exile, in battle, had taken refuge in his own room in the basement, as a wild beast, mortally wounded, slinks to its lair.

In vain had Don Cosmo, for about a week, tried to arouse him, to make him speak, moved by his own disconsolate pity for all those who deliberately shunned the remedy which he himself had found to cure every ill. To his insistent requests that Mauro should at least come upstairs to the villa for dinner and supper, the other had replied, with a shrug:

“Corpo di Dio, can’t you leave me alone?”

“What will you eat?”

“My hands, I can gnaw them! Go away!”

In a swifter and more abrupt fashion, on the day after his return, he had replied to the pigeons, which during his absence had been assembled twice daily, at the appointed hours, by the *curà-tolo*, Ninfa's Vanni: “Bang! Bang!” a couple of shots in the air; and had dispersed them in fluttering confusion. Nor had he given any better reception to the welcome offered him by the three mastiffs, almost mad with joy at seeing him again.

The placid immobility of the old things in the room, which, steeped all of them in a sort of animal odour, seemed to be waiting for him to resume his normal existence among them, had aroused in him a fierce irritation: he would have liked to seize in both hands the straw mattress, which was rolled up in a corner, and fling it out of doors, with the boards and trestles that supported it, and out with that broken olive-press, and out with the chairs and boxes and halters and saddles and paniers. The only things that he had been glad to see again were the marks on the wall of the spittle, yellow with chewed tobacco, which, as he lay on his bed, he was in the habit of ejaculating in the faces of the enemies of his country, Sanfedisti and Bourbonists.

Again and again, the lure of old memories had tried to recapture him; again and again, seen

through the open door, the long rows of vines, interspersed with the now budding poplars, in the awed silence of certain hours full of immemorial abandonment, had for a moment reconstructed the remote vision of that world, through which, until a short time ago, he used to wander on cloudless days, bursting with pride, like a god, stroking his beard. Suddenly, every time, the spirit that was already on its way, fascinated, towards that vision, had been drawn back by the harsh, angry buzz of a hornet which, coming into the room, recalled him forcibly to the present and broke the charm and shattered the vision.

What was he to do? How could he picture himself any longer in these spots that bore witness to his past exaltation? How could he hope any more for the healing peace of the country, when he knew that the whole of Sicily was turned upside down and all those vile renegades were rising to overthrow and destroy the work of their elders?

For years past, all his thoughts, all his sentiments, all his dreams had consisted in memories of that work and in satisfaction at its accomplishment. How could he find any rest, with the knowledge that it was threatened and on the point of destruction? In spite of the consideration due to his age, in spite of the seductive charm of his old, peaceful habits, he saw himself obliged by his ingenuous logic to admit that it was a debt of honour binding upon all those who like himself wore

the medals on their breasts, as a reward for that work, to rally now in its defence.

“The old National Guard! The Old Guard! Fall in, all the veterans!”

And finally, in a moment of more intense excitement, he had tottered like a blind man, for shelter and for counsel, to the General’s camerone, in which, hitherto, he had not had the heart to set foot.

As soon as he was inside, he had burst out sobbing, and without venturing to open the shutters of the windows and the balcony doors, which he had barred with loving care before setting out for Rome, had remained for a long time in the darkness, his face buried in his hands, weeping upon the dusty and dilapidated sofa. Gradually, the roar, the zest of the band of lions, the conspirators of Forty-Eight, who used to assemble there, in that room, round the old General, came back to him and made him ashamed of his tears; the ghosts of those lions, terribly indignant, had risen up round him and called to him to go in haste, yes, yes, to go in haste, old as he was, and prevent with the other old men who still survived the destruction of their country.

In the darkness, from a corner of that room, the melancholy stuffed leopard, minus an eye, had been unable to make him see all the cobwebs that fastened it to the wall, all the dust that had fallen upon its skin, spotted now, in addition to its

natural markings, with many patches of mould! And Mauro Mortara had emerged with a terrible glare in his eyes, red and swollen with weeping, and had all but sprung upon Don Cosmo, who, happening to pass along the corridor, had stopped first of all in astonishment, seeing him in this state, and stared at him, and had then tried to restrain and calm him.

“If I didn’t know that your mother was a saint, I should call you a bastard!” Mauro had shouted at him, almost clawing his face with his hands.

Don Cosmo had not moved a muscle, except to smile sadly, shaking his head, in token of commiseration; and had asked him where he proposed to go, against whom he proposed to fight at his age.

Mauro had made off without answering. And, downstairs, in his room in the basement, had actually begun to make preparations for departure. At his age? Sanguè della Madonna, what had age to do with it? Who dare speak of age, to him! Where did he propose to go? He did not know. Armed to the teeth, ready for any provocation, he would go up to Girgenti, to discuss and arrange some plan of campaign with the other veterans, Marco Sala, Celàuro, Trigona, Mattia Gangi, who surely, if the blood still flowed in their veins, must feel, as he did, the need to arm themselves and rally in defence of their common handiwork. If their enemies were united, banded in Fasci, why,

could not they unite, band themselves in a Fascio of their own, of the Old Guard? The troops were not sufficient; civilians must give them solid support, forcibly disband these Fasci, scatter all these dogs with powder and shot, if need be. The priests were certainly behind them, secretly fomenting them; and France too, France too, it was said, was sending money, on the sly, to dismember Italy and set the Pope back on his throne in Rome. And, for all one knew, once the revolution had broken out, she would try to land a force from Tunis in Sicily. How could he stay there with folded hands, without even attempting to defend the country, without even shewing his face to his old comrades and saying to them: "Here I am!" He must be off, be off at once!

Only, little by little, his zeal had become entangled, as in a spider's web, by all the relics of his adventurous life, exhumed from old boxes and drawers and threadbare, patched sacks, and parcels wrapped in faded paper, tightly tied with string. His plan was to make a selection, and to carry away with him as many as he could of the more precious. Confused, stunned, baffled by the memories that each one of them called to life, after a time his head had begun to swim and he had been obliged to stop. No, it was not possible to free himself so precipitately from all these bonds. And he had put off his departure until the following day.

All that night he had remained out of doors, wandering about, a prey to hallucinations. The voice of the sea was that of the General; the shadowy trees were the ghosts of the old conspirators of Valsanìa; and all alike kept on urging him to start. Yes, to-morrow, to-morrow; he would go out and face those cut-throats; they would overpower him and kill him; but yes, such was his desire, if the work of destruction was to be completed! What further value would his medals have, otherwise? He must die for them and with them! And he would pin them to his breast, to-morrow, before setting out to confront the new enemies of his country. For Sicily must not be dishonoured, no, no, she must not be dishonoured in the eyes of the other regions of Italy, which had united to make her great and glorious!

On the following day, with his huge shaggy cap on his head, staggering under his load of papers and relics, his four medals on his breast, the knapsack on his back and armed to the teeth, he had appeared before Don Cosmo to take leave of him. And he would doubtless have gone, had not Don Cosmo been supported in his efforts to detain him by Don Leonardo Costa, who had arrived from Porto Empedocle.

Having left Salvo's employ, after his son's death, and having relapsed to the ill paid and uncertain position of a foreman at the weighhouse, Leonardo Costa had accepted, chiefly in the hope

of escaping from his own society, Don Cosmo's compassionate invitation to him to come over every evening from Porto Empedocle to feed and sleep at Valsania. The way was neither short nor easy, in the dark, on moonless evenings, along the railway line with its uneven ballast of rocks. Since his bereavement, a mortal weariness had made his legs as heavy as bars of lead. More than once he had seen the train bear down upon him; more than once he had been tempted to throw himself under the wheels and make an end of things. When there was no work to be found down on the shore, he would go up to the villa early, and through this channel, for some time past, news had been reaching Valsania without delay.

Had he not, that day, brought the tidings that the army corps had landed at Palermo, and would be certain, in the twinkling of an eye, to crush and scatter the revolt, neither he nor Don Cosmo would have been able to restrain Mauro from going.

To calm him still further, there had next come the news of the proclamation of the state of siege and of the order to disarm. Never for an instant had it entered his mind that this order to hand over arms could possibly refer to himself, or that he could run the risk of being arrested, if he went up to the town armed. His arms were on the same footing as the soldiers'; the permission to bear them was conferred on him by his medals.

The effect upon his spirit of the latest news brought by Costa had been like the effect upon a forest already swept by a tempest of a rapid alternation of sunshine and clouds. It had cleared slightly, when he learned that in Rome Roberto Auriti had been released from prison, although only upon bail, and that his brother Giulio had returned to Rome taking with him his sister and her son; and had darkened again at the unexpected revelation, that Landino, the General's grandson, the inheritor of his name, was among the ring-leaders of the rising, and had fled from Palermo, after the proclamation of the state of siege, to escape arrest.

After this information, he had taken to eyeing Leonardo Costa with a savage frown, as soon as he saw him arrive tired and breathless from Porto Empedocle.

His thirst for knowledge had to contend with the angry fear that the man was coming, light-heartedly, to make some announcement that would once more oblige him to arm himself and set forth from Valsania. Since he had been on the point of doing so, he had known by experience what it would cost him to sever himself from the place, to tear himself away from all the memories that bound him to it, to relinquish the custody of the camerone, his vineyard, his pigeons, the trees that for so many years had listened to his discourses.

But Leonardo Costa, warned by his fury on the

former occasion, knew now what news was for him, what for Don Cosmo and Donna Sara Alàimo. He had allowed the report about the Prince's son to escape him, because he supposed that Mauro already knew him to be a Socialist and would naturally be pleased to hear that he had managed to escape.

The last piece of news that Costa was to bring, and brought piping hot, arrived amid the lightning, wind and rain of an infernal night.

Mauro had prepared the supper, in the place of Donna Sara, who had been in bed for the last two days with a severe chill; and he was waiting in the dining-room with Don Cosmo for their guest who, perhaps because of the bad weather, was late in coming. This delay irritated him, not so much because he was hungry as because he was afraid that the supper might be spoiled. He had always put his heart into everything that he did, and among all the many memories that gave him satisfaction was that of how he had made the English "lick their fingers," when he was cook, first on board ship and then at Constantinople. One of the reasons for his hatred of Donna Sara was precisely the malicious joy that she had displayed upon several occasions at the utter failure of sundry lessons in cookery which he had tried to teach her. Out of practice, and with a mind confused and distracted by all his worries, he had been venturing for the last two days with imper-

turbable courage upon the concoction of the most complicated dishes, and had been poisoning their guest and poor Don Cosmo.

“What do you think of it?”

“Oh, it’s delicious,” was Don Cosmo’s invariable answer. “Perhaps, though, I haven’t much appetite.”

“To my mind,” Costa hazarded, “I feel that it might be better with a touch of salt.”

“O Marasantissima,” Mauro broke out, “here’s the salt-cellar!”

Donna Sara had eaten nothing for two days.

Through the scream of the wind, the terrifying roar of the sea, the lashing of the rain, they could hear her fits of coughing, her lamentations and the prayers she repeated aloud. Evidently overcome by a furious attack of religious mania, she had locked herself up in her own little room and refused all offers of attention.

Now and again Don Cosmo, hearing her cough rather louder and longer than usual, would go in haste to call to her through the door of her room and to ask her if there was nothing she wished. Donna Sara’s sole reply was to shout back at him, as soon as she was able, in a choking voice:

“Repent, you wicked devils!”

And she would go on shouting out Aves and Paternosters.

At length Leonardo Costa arrived, in a pitiable

state, all blown about by the wind, with the water running in streams from his cloak and three inches of mud on his boots. He was completely out of breath, and could not hold his head up, he was so tired. Mauro, by way of medicine, made him gulp down a tumbler of wine immediately, meeting his resistance with the usual exclamation:

“Oh Marasantissima, lasciatevi servire!”

Don Cosmo hurried him off to his bedroom and helped him to change his coat, making him put on one of his own, which was extremely tight for him, but at any rate was not wet. Meanwhile Mauro had brought in the supper, and was calling from the dining-room:

“Holy devil, are you coming or aren’t you?”

When he saw them appear with their eyes starting out of their heads, he became apprehensive and asked with a frown:

“What’s the matter now?”

Neither of them answered him. Don Cosmo, instead, asked Costa:

“And Ippolito? Ippolito?”

“He was asleep,” was the answer. “At three o’clock in the morning! He was asleep. But the story goes that when the sentry, who had been made to open the gate, ran up to the villa to report. . . .”

“Are you speaking of Don Landino?” Mauro interrupted him at this point, thrusting himself

furiously between them. "Tell me what has happened?"

"Don Landino, no!" replied Costa, a look of melancholy gaiety appearing on his face. "They have dealt a finishing blow to that gallant gentleman, who was down here for a month trampling on your face! I know that you love him as dearly as I do!"

"Salvo?"

"The same!"

And Costa raised his foot as though to stamp on the neck of the fallen man. He went on:

"His sister, the Prince's wife, ran away, last night, with the Deputy Capolino . . ."

"Ran away? How do you mean, ran away?"

"How, eh? It's quite simple. . . . He came to fetch her in a carriage, and they went off in the middle of the night, by the three o'clock train, to Palermo. Of course they had arranged it all beforehand. . . ."

Don Cosmo, still staring in amazement, murmured quietly to himself:

"Poor Ippolito . . . poor Ippolito . . ."

"He's all right!" Mauro shouted in his face.

"What comes of mixing himself with people of that class," added Costa with a grimace of disgust. "After all, you know, Si-don Cosmo, it is mortifying, perhaps, I don't say it isn't. . . . It's a terrible scandal: they are talking of nothing else at Girgenti and in the port. . . . But, after all

. . . he wasn't even treating her as a wife . . . people say they slept in different rooms and . . . if one's to listen to gossip . . . the rascal is getting her as she was before her marriage. . . . When the sentry went up to the villa to report their escape and the servant went in to wake the Prince, they say he didn't even lift his head from the pillow, and said to the servant: 'Indeed? A pleasant journey to them! I shall remember to be annoyed about it in the morning, when I get up. . . .'

Don Cosmo shook his head and his raised forefinger emphatically several times, and put in:

"Ippolito never said that!"

"If you ask my opinion," Costa went on, sitting down to table with the others, and beginning his supper, "what else could you expect him to say? I am sorry for the Prince; but I am delighted, greatly delighted at the scandal to her brother. . . . Ah, Si-don Cosmo, I don't know really why I go on living! I should like to save my soul, I swear to you; I should like to give it time to forget its pain, so that, at least in the hour of death, it might forgive him and rise to the throne of God. . . . But no, Si-don Cosmo: the pain is too strong, and it devours my soul; my hatred of him grows and becomes more furious from day to day; and then I say to myself: Why not? Would it not be better to kill first him and then myself, and to make an end?"

"Perhaps," Don Cosmo murmured, "you would be doing him a service. . . ."

"That is just what keeps me from doing it!" exclaimed Costa. "Because I should be doing myself a service as well!"

"Eat and stop crying!" Mauro shouted at him.

"Have patience, Don Mauro," Costa turned to him, forcing himself to smile. "Your dishes, to my palate, always want just a touch of salt. A few tears give a savour to them."

Don Cosmo, meanwhile, lost in thought, gazing attentively at a morsel of meat speared on his suspended fork, was saying to himself:

"Like a pair of children. . . ."

And amid her fits of coughing Donna Sara continued to shout from the room beyond:

"Repent, you wicked devils! Repent!"

It will pass!

Suddenly, while the three at the table were finishing their supper, from outside the house, where the wind and rain were still raging, above the continuous roar of trees and sea, they heard the furious barking of the mastiffs, which waited every evening on the steps for their master to emerge after supper.

Mauro, knitting his brows, sat upright on his chair and listened intently. The barks were a warning that there was somebody outside the villa. And who could it be at that hour, and in such vile

weather? Confused shouts were heard. Mauro sprang to his feet, snatched up his gun, which was standing in a corner of the room, and went to the front door. Before opening it, he put his ear to the chink, and immediately, hearing that down below, in front of the villa, the dogs were trying to prevent several people from passing, who were shouting as they defended themselves, blew out the light, flung the door open, and through the violent hiss of the rain, in the pitch darkness, levelling his gun, bellowed from the top of the steps:

“Who’s there?”

A throb of sinister light illuminated the scene, vaguely, for an instant. Mauro thought he could make out four or five men who, in spite of a desperate resistance, were retreating before the assault of the mastiffs.

“Mauro, perdio! These dogs! I shall kill one of them! I’ve been shouting to you for the last three hours!”

“Don Landino?”

And Mauro, trembling with excitement, dashed down the steps, into the gale, under the pelting rain.

“Where are you? Where are you?”

At the sound of their master’s voice the dogs abandoned the assault, without however ceasing to bark.

“Mauro!”

“You, here?” the old man cried, taking the dogs’ place now in barring the other’s way. “Here? You, here? You have the audacity to seek refuge here with your companions in infamy? I shan’t let you in! Away with you! This is your Grandfather’s house! I shan’t let you in!”

“Mauro, are you mad?”

“In the name of Gerlando Laurentano, begone! Away with you! Over there, with your father, is the hiding-place for you and your companions, not here! I shan’t let you in!”

“Are you mad? Let me pass!” cried Lando, wrenching himself from the grip of Mauro, who had seized him by the arm.

A light shone out at the head of the steps, to be extinguished at once by the wind. And Don Cosmo, who had come hurrying to the door with Costa, called from above:

“Landino! Landino!”

His nephew answered:

“Uncle Cosmo!” and, turning to his companions, “Come along up!”

Whereupon, “Don Landino!” Mauro warned him in a voice broken by exasperation. “Do not set foot in your Grandfather’s villa! If you do, I go away for ever! Give thanks to God, that your name is Gerlando Laurentano! It is only your name that keeps me from making a bonfire of you and these carrion, sacks of dung, that you have brought with you! Oh, indeed? So you’re

going in? God, for a thunderbolt, to shatter the house and destroy the lot of you! Wait, here you are, take this, complete your bold assault! I surrender the key to you!"

And the huge key of the camerone came clattering against the front door as it closed again.

"He's mad! He's mad!" repeated, in the darkness, Lando, Don Cosmo, Costa, searching in their pockets for matches with which to relight the lamp, while Lando's companions, astounded at such a reception in the sanctuary for which they had so yearned and which now at last they had reached, inquired, breathless and puzzled:

"But who is he?"

"Really mad?"

"But why?"

When the lamp had been lighted, the five fugitives, Lando, Lino Apes, Bixio Bruno, Cataldo Scàfani and Ingrão, appeared as though they had been fished out of a torrent of mud. Cataldo Scàfani, with his panic-stricken face, bristling already upon cheeks, lip and chin with the beard that was beginning to sprout afresh, was the most pitiable of them all: he looked like a terrified patient who had escaped by night from a hospital that had been blown away by the storm.

For a moment there was a fusillade of curt questions and hurried answers, interspersed with exclamations, sighs, and weary groans; and one

shook himself, another stamped his feet, another looked round for a chair on which to fling himself down.

“Followed?” “No, no. . . .” “Recognized?” “Perhaps!” “What’s that? No. . . .” “Yes. . . .” “Lando, perhaps. . . .” “On foot! How on earth?” “For three days!” “Torrents of rain!” “But how, I mean to say, you never attracted attention?”

This last exclamation came—need it be said?—from Don Cosmo. He went about repeating it to each of them in turn, struggling to concentrate his thoughts in the general confusion, which made him scratch the hair on his cheeks, with both hands.

“I mean to say . . . I mean to say. . . . How in the world? You never attracted attention?”

And he might have gone on repeating the question all night, had not the idea finally occurred to him that he ought to be offering some sort of help to these young men. What sort of help?

“I know, come along next door!” he began to invite them, seizing first one, then another by the arm. “Take your clothes off at once. . . . I have things . . . things for all of you . . . in here, in my bedroom . . . they’re in the chest, come with me!”

Bixio Bruno and Ingrão, less bewildered and less tired than the others, stoutly opposed this strange insistence.

"No, no! Let us stay as we are!" cried the former. "There's no time to waste. . . . Is Porto Empedocle far from here?"

"Why, yes," exclaimed Lando, turning to his uncle. "Some one, a trustworthy peasant, to send to Porto Empedocle at once, to hire a boat . . . one of those big fishing boats . . ."

"Before the light comes, for heaven's sake!" pleaded Scîafani, coming forward with his panic-stricken air. "We ought to be out at sea before daybreak! We may have been recognized. . . ."

"Go on! I tell you, no," Ingrão shouted at him.

"And I tell you, yes!" retorted Scîafani. "At Girgenti station, Lando, I could swear, was recognized. . . ."

Leonardo Costa observed that the hiring of a boat, in so ticklish a situation, was not a task to be entrusted to a peasant.

"I can go myself, if you like! In fact, I will go this instant!"

"In this weather?" Don Cosmo asked, in a tone of distress. "Gentlemen, do not be in such a hurry. . . . Take my advice, and get your clothes off: you will catch your death. . . . D'you see . . . here . . . this friend of mine . . . d'you see? I made him change, just now. . . . There are clothes . . . enough for everybody . . . in the chest, come and look!"

Costa, with a shrug of impatience, asked the young men:

“Would you like the boat to put in here, below Valsanìa?”

“Yes, yes, here!” replied Lando. “No, uncle, for goodness sake, leave me alone!”

“Take your things off, I tell you. . . .”

“It is not prudent,” Lando went on, turning to Costa, while his uncle forcibly stripped him of his greatcoat, “it is not prudent to shew ourselves at Porto Empedocle. By this time all the seaports are certain to have received orders from Palermo for our arrest.”

“But it will be difficult,” Costa pointed out, “for a tartan to put in below here, at night, in this heavy sea. . . . However; I am not backing out. . . . We can try. . . .”

And he went to fetch from the hall his big hooded cloak, still soaked with the rain.

“Friends!” shouted Ingrão, “would it not be better to go with this gentleman, while it is still night and no one can see us? We can remain in hiding just outside the town, until he has hired the boat!”

This suggestion was overruled by a wise observation from Lino Apes:

“What do you mean? Do you suppose that a tartan can be hired in five minutes, in the middle of the night and on a night like this? He will have to find the skipper. . . .”

“I know him!” Costa interrupted. “I know

one who is a friend of mine, absolutely to be trusted."

"And the crew?" asked Apes. "The skipper by himself is no use."

"Certainly! I shall have to find the crew as well," Costa admitted, "and get the boat ready. . . . It can't be done before daybreak."

"In that case, no!" Sclàfani at once shouted, again stepping impetuously forward. "At Porto Empedocle, by daylight, no! We shall have to embark here!"

"In the meantime, I'm off!" said Leonardo Costa, who was already in his cloak.

"My poor friend!" groaned Don Cosmo. "Must you really?"

Costa refused to listen to a word of either commiseration or thanks, and ventured forth into the tempestuous darkness.

When Lando heard that he was the father of Aurelio Costa, who had been barbarously murdered with the wife of the Deputy Capolino by the sulphur workers of the Aragona Fascio, he looked darkly at Ingrão and the rest. Misinterpreting this look, Bruno expressed, albeit hesitatingly, the suspicion that he might be going to Porto Empedocle to avenge himself, by denouncing them. Whereupon Don Cosmo, shaping his lips, emitted his habitual laugh, a triple "Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"He?" he said; and explained the attitude and devotion of his poor friend, who, laying the blame

for his son's death entirely upon Flaminio Salvo, had never given a moment's thought to the members of the Aragona Fascio.

"Oh, by the way!" he went on, reminded by the name Salvo which had come thus by chance to his lips. And he drew Lando aside to inform him of Donna Adelaide's elopement.

"Like a schoolgirl, don't you know? At three o'clock in the morning!"

In the general hubbub, no one had paid any attention to the voice of Donna Sara Alàimo who, imagining perhaps a genuine invasion by devils on this night of tempest, kept repeating more furiously than ever, from her little room far away at the end of the corridor:

"Repe-e-ent, you wicked devils!"

The strange cry rang out with a most startling effect in this momentary silence, and everyone, except Don Cosmo, was staggered by it; including Lando, staggered already on his own account by what his uncle had just told him.

"Who is it?"

"Oh, nothing, Donna Sara!" was the answer, as though Lando and his companions had known the old housekeeper of Valsania for years. "She's driving me out of my wits, upon my word. . . . She has shut herself up in her room for the last two days, shouting like that. . . . She is ill, poor woman. Here, too. . . ."

And he tapped his forehead.

Lando's four companions looked one another in the face. In what sort of place had they landed after three days of desperate flight? The old man had been declared mad, who had given them that warm welcome to begin with; now this other old woman had been declared mad too; and that the third was completely in his right mind who so confidently declared the other two to be mad did not, in truth, appear to them any too evident. Up to that moment, this uncle of Lando's, except for their wet and muddy clothes, had shewn no anxiety.

Sure enough, "Haven't you changed yet?" Don Cosmo exclaimed in surprise, after giving them this explanation of Donna Sara's cry; and he hastened to open the chest in which his cast-off garments were stored. "Here, here . . . take what you want. . . . I tell you, there's enough for you all!"

The four young men could control their laughter no longer, and set to work to help one another out of their rain-soaked garments.

"The only thing that matters just now, I assure you," said Don Cosmo, "is, that you should not catch a chill. Laugh at me if you like, but change your clothes."

That there was enough for them all proved, however, to be an over-estimate. Lino Apes, not finding any garment left in the chest for himself, came forward with the seminarist's cassock

spread out on his arms, as though he were carrying a child to the font:

“May I take this?”

“Why not? Ah, what is it, the cassock? Yes . . . if it fits you. . . .”

And he smiled at the laughter of the other four, who were awkwardly struggling into the other garments, all of which emitted a pungent smell of camphor. Cataldo Selàfani had arrayed himself in the frock coat, and, as his head was aching, had tied round it, carter fashion, a fine big yellow cotton handkerchief, with a red check.

Gradually youth took the upper hand. None of them thought any longer of their defeat, of the uncertainty of the future. Jostled and chaffed by his companions, Lino Apes, strait-jacketed in the seminarist's cassock, hobbled to the kitchen to light the fire. They were hungry! thirsty! But here Don Cosmo found himself at a nonplus: he barely knew where the larder was; and as for the key, Mauro probably had it on him. . . .

“The key?” cried Ingrão. “I know where it is!”

And he ran to pick up from the top of the steps outside the key that Mauro had flung against the door, which had been left lying there.

Don Cosmo studied it thoughtfully.

“This?” he said. “No. . . . Why, what has happened? This is the key of the camerone! Where did you find it?”

In the confusion he had not heard Mauro's final cry; and, when he learned that the key had been hurled at Lando, he at once grew pensive, and turning to his nephew:

"But in that case you will find . . . oh per Dio!" he exclaimed, "if he threw the key at you, you will find that he really is going. . . . Perhaps he has gone already!"

"Gone? Where?" asked Lando, echoing the alarm and regret of his uncle.

"Who can tell?" sighed Don Cosmo. And he recounted briefly the difficulty he had in keeping Mauro at home; then, as the other four young men were laughing at the crazy ideas and sentiment of this strange old man, he was obliged to tell them who Mauro was, what he had done; what the camerone meant to him and what it contained.

"Indeed? A stuffed leopard too?"

And, stirred by curiosity, Lino Apes, Ingrão, Bruno, Scàfani, as soon as Don Cosmo and Lando had gone in search of Mauro, retrieved the key and went into the camerone.

Immediately below it was Mauro Mortara's room.

Don Cosmo and Lando, candle in hand, had gone into a secret chamber, in the floor of which was a trap door communicating with the basement of the villa; taking care to make no noise they had lifted the trap, and gone down by the steep wooden

stair, none too sound underfoot, to the cellar; from it they had passed into the flour store; they had next crossed two large, empty store-rooms, a dark closet heaped with piles of old farming implements, and had arrived at an inner door leading to Mauro's room.

As he bent down to look in, Lando saw a gleam of light beneath the door.

"Mauro!" Don Cosmo called, "Mauro!"

There was no reply.

Lando stooped again, to look through the key-hole.

There reached them from above the noise made by the other four, who were chasing Lino Apes about the camerone in his seminarist's cassock, and shouting and laughing.

Mauro Mortara, seated in front of a chest, which he had pulled out from under his bed, was resting his arms upon the rim of the raised lid, his face being hidden between them.

"What is happening? What is he doing?" Don Cosmo asked.

Lando shook his fist angrily at the ceiling, which rang with the din that his friends were making. He felt, together with a bitter resentment at them and at himself, a keen remorse for the wounding insult to the sentiments of his dear old man, and a heartrending grief at not being able at that moment to add his own affectionate appeal to his uncle's.

“What is he doing?” the latter again inquired, lowering his voice.

What it was that Mauro was doing, with his face hidden thus between his arms, was indicated unmistakably by the medals which, pinned to his breast and left dangling by the position in which he was sitting, could be heard shaking every now and then. He was crying . . . yes . . . that was it . . . he was crying . . . and he had on his shoulders that absurd knapsack, which Lando had seen him wearing in Rome.

“Mauro!” Don Cosmo called to him again.

At this repeated summons, Lando, his eye still pressed to the keyhole, saw him raise his head and remain for a while listening, without however turning to face the door; he then saw him rise and dash across to the table.

“He has put out the light,” he told his uncle, as he rose from his stooping posture.

They both stood there for a while listening, wondering when they would hear Mauro open the door. They realized then that they were so to speak prisoners: they had not the keys either of the store-rooms, or of the flour store or of the cellar, and would therefore be obliged to return upstairs, if they were to prevent him from going; they must act quickly, so as not to give him time to get out of reach. But not a sound came from his room.

Don Cosmo made a sign to his nephew to go up-

stairs again, in silence. When they were in the nearer of the two store-rooms, he stopped and said in a whisper :

“In any case, if he is determined to go, neither you nor I can prevent him by force. Perhaps he will come back, when you people are gone, and his anger has cooled.”

Lando looked at his old uncle, whom he barely knew, in that huge store, over which the light of the candle projected, monstrosously enlarged, the shadows of their bodies, and received the impression that a strange, unimagined reality was suddenly presenting itself to his gaze, with the queer inconsequence of a dream. For some time past he had ceased to perceive any reason for his actions, all of which left behind them a train of discomfort, a bitter taste of humiliation; but now more than ever, face to face with the reality, so strangely distinct, of this uncle of his, detached from life, in this lonely old house in the country, standing before him, in this empty store-room, with that candle in his hand. He was tempted to blow it out, as Mauro, a moment ago, had blown out the light in his own room, on the other side of the closed door. He heard the sound of the wind, the roar of the sea : outside was tempestuous darkness; including that of the fate which lay in store for him. It was essential that he should, in that darkness, at all costs, absolutely, find a reason for action, in which all his uneasiness

should be set at rest, all the uncertainties of his intellect should cease to torment him. But what? When? Where?

"It will pass," said Don Cosmo a little later, the corners of his mouth drooping, his brow furrowed as though by waves of thought driven inwards by the ebb tide of his disconsolate wisdom, and with that look in his eyes which seemed to banish and scatter in the void of time all the bitter and irritating contingencies of life. "It will pass, my dear people . . . it will pass. . . ."

The four young men had discovered the larder by themselves, and, since the door was open, had brought to the table all that they required; now, after they had eaten and quenched their thirst, they were making desperate efforts to struggle against the longing for sleep that had suddenly descended upon their eyelids.

Don Cosmo's exclamation was a reply to the account they had given, some with brooding bitterness, others with angry resentment and Lino Apes with his customary wit, of the recent tumultuous happenings. Looking upon them as already far remote in time, Don Cosmo was unable to discern either their meaning or their object. His aspect, to Lando's eyes, suggested the same feeling that we derive from the inanimate objects that look on, impassive, at the transience of human affairs.

"Did you see the leopard?"

"Yes, a beauty . . . a beauty . . . " growled

Ingrão, burying his face, with the deformity of his dark birthmark, between his arms, which were resting upon the table.

“That was a live leopard once!”

Lino Apes opened his eyes and inquired, with a show of terror:

“A man-eater?”

“I tell you,” Don Cosmo went on, “because now, my dear friends, it is stuffed with wadding. And that letter from my father? Did you read it? A faded sheet of paper. . . . And a living hand wrote it, like this hand of mine, like yours. . . . What is it now? That poor madman has put it in a frame. . . . Louis Napoleon . . . the *Coup d’État* . . . events in France . . .”

He pressed his finger-tips together and waved his hands in the air, as much as to say: “What is left of them now? What meaning have they?”

“Realities of a moment . . . nonsense . . .”

He rose; went across to the balcony window, which for some time now had been making no noise, and turned to his nephew:

“Do you hear how still it is?” he said. “I give you the comforting intelligence that the wind has ceased. . . .”

“Ceased?” asked Cataldo Sclàfani, raising with a jerk from his arms, for he too had been sprawling over the table, his panic-stricken face, like a sick man’s in convalescence, with the yellow handkerchief pulled down over his forehead.

"That's good. . . . We shall embark here. . . . Good night!"

And he settled down again to sleep.

"So it is with everything . . ." sighed Don Cosmo, beginning to pace up and down the room; and went on, coming to a standstill at intervals: "One thing only is sad, my friends: to have understood the game! I mean the game played by that frolicsome devil whom each of us has inside him, and who diverts himself by representing to us outside ourselves, as reality, what, a moment later, he himself reveals to us as our own illusion, laughing at us for the efforts we have made to secure it, and laughing at us also, as has been my case, for not having had the sense to delude ourselves, since outside these illusions there is no other reality. . . . And so, do not complain! Wear yourselves out and torment yourselves, without thinking that all this never comes to any conclusion. If it does not come to a conclusion, that is a sign that it ought not to come to a conclusion, and that it is idle therefore to seek a conclusion. We must live, that is to say delude ourselves; allow the frolicsome devil to play his game in us, until he grows tired of playing it; and remember that all this will pass . . . will pass. . . ."

He looked round the table and drew Lando's attention to his sleeping companions.

"In fact, you see? It has passed already. . . ."

And he left him there by himself, at the table.

Lando gazed at the awkward uncomfortable attitudes of his friends, their ludicrous attire, their tired and worn faces, and envied them their ability to sleep and at the same time despised it. They had been able to joke; now they were able to sleep, forgetting that the disorders provoked by their preaching to a people oppressed by so many acts of injustice, but still deaf and blind, were now furnishing the Government with an excuse to trample once again upon this land, which alone, without making terms, with a generous impulse had given itself to Italy and in reward had received nothing but poverty and neglect. They were able to sleep, these friends of his, forgetful of the blood of all their victims, forgetful of their comrades who had fallen into the hands of the police, who undoubtedly, in the course of the next few days, would be sentenced by the military courts.

He rose from the table also; went out to the entrance hall, meaning to emerge into the open, to breathe a mouthful of fresh air, to free himself from his painful oppression, now that the wind and rain had ceased. But with his hand on the door he stopped, overcome by the odour of immemorial life that brooded over this villa, in which his grandfather had lived, in which with that desolate sense of precariousness this uncle of his allowed his joyless days to pass to no profit, in which Mauro Mortara. . . . Suddenly, at the

thought of his old friend, whom he had cruelly uprooted, in his declining days, from this dwelling, which the cult of so many memories rendered sacred to him, he started: nothing else made him feel such contempt and shame for his own work and the work of his comrades as this latest effect of it: the driving away from Valsania of its old guardian, he who for some time past had impressed him as the purest incarnation of the old Island spirit; and he ran down the steps to try to placate him, to cry aloud to him that he was sorry, and to force him to remain.

The door of Mauro's room stood open; the room itself was in darkness and empty.

On the threshold the three mastiffs stood hesitating and bewildered. They did not bark. In fact, they gathered anxiously round him, pricking their pointed ears, wagging their stumpy tails, as though they were asking him why their master, whom they had followed as they followed him every night, after a certain distance had turned and driven them back, had rudely dismissed them: why?

From a balcony at the end of the house came Don Cosmo's voice:

"Has he gone?"

"Yes," said Lando.

Don Cosmo said nothing more. In the black darkness, solemn and portentous, of the still troubled night, he stood listening to the crashing

of the sea against the cliffs of Valsanìa and the barking of dogs, near and far; then, placing his hand on his bald head, he fixed his gaze upon a few stars, nailheads of the mystery, as he called them, that appeared in a clear patch of sky, among the ragged clouds.

The reward.

Without heeding the mud on the road, in which his iron-shod boots floundered and splashed; his eyes overshadowed by his beetling brows and almost closed; his whole face contorted with anger; a burning pain in his heart and his mind possessed by a darkness blacker than that of the night through which he was trudging, Mauro Mortara was, by this time, more than a mile from Valsanìa.

He was walking through a night still troubled by the last mutterings of the storm, buffeted now and again by an icy squall, which splashed in his face the drops that fell from the trees overhanging the walls on either side of the road. He stooped as he went, walking with bowed head, his gun slung over his shoulder, the brace of pistols at his hips, a dagger with a leather sheath in his belt, his knapsack on his back, his fleecy cap on his head and his medals on his breast.

He was going up in the direction of Girgenti; but he meant to go farther, to leave the road at a certain point and take to the railway line; to

pass through a short tunnel, come out in Val Solano, and there, just before he reached the station, turn off along another road to Favara, where, on a small farm beyond the village, lived a peasant nephew of his, the son of his sister who had died years before, who had more than once offered him a home in the event of his being obliged by ill-health to retire from Valsanìa.

He was going there, to this nephew, but he preferred not to think about it.

His head, his heart were still battered, crushed and torn by the trampling feet of those young men who, as a supreme outrage, had gone in to profane the General's camerone, while he, in his own room below, was preparing for his departure. He refused to think or to feel anything more; to form any picture in his mind of the days that remained to him.

Gradually, however, his battered heart, stung by the gadfly thought that perhaps this nephew had offered him a home because he expected to inherit untold wealth from him, began to stir within him and to swell with injured pride.

Only in his young days, and from the hands of the General, before his departure into exile at Malta, had he received a wage. Since his return to Valsanìa, after the storm-tossed vicissitudes of his roving life, at sea, in Turkey, in Asia Minor, in Africa, and after the campaign of 1860, he had always given his services there, disinterestedly.

And now, at seventy-eight, he was leaving the place as poor as a church mouse, without a penny in his pocket, his sole wealth those medals on his breast.

But just because this was all the wealth that he had amassed by the work of a lifetime,—“Fool,” he could say to this nephew, “you are the owner of three rods of land; and if you take one step beyond them you are no longer upon your own ground; I, on the other hand, stand here, always on my own ground, wherever I set my foot, throughout the length and breadth of Sicily! Because I have scoured the Island from end to end to liberate her from the tyrant who was keeping her enslaved!”

Given this start, his exaltation increased every moment, fomented on the one hand by his grief at having severed himself for ever from Valsania, and on the other by the need to fill up, by recalling all the memories that could bring him comfort, the void that he saw before him.

He laughed and talked to himself aloud and waved his arms, without heeding where he was going: he laughed at the metals of the railway line, at the telegraph poles, fruits of the Revolution, and beat his breast and said:

“What do I care? I . . . I . . . Sicily . . . Oh Marasantissima . . . I tell you Sicily. . . . If it had not been for Sicily. . . . If Sicily had not chosen . . . Sicily moved and said to Italy: ‘Here

I am! I am coming to join you! Do you move down from Piedmont with your King, I shall come up from here with Garibaldi, and we shall join forces in Rome! Let us see who can get there first!’ And who would have got there first? Oh Marasantissima, I know; Aspromonte, reasons of State, I know! But Sicily wished to be the first, from here . . . always Sicily. . . . And now a handful of scoundrels have tried to dishonour her. . . . But Sicily is here, here, here with me. . . . Sicily, who does not let herself be dishonoured, is here with me!”

He found himself, of a sudden, at the mouth of the short tunnel that comes out in Val Sollano, and was amazed that he had reached it so quickly, without knowing how; before entering the tunnel, he looked up at the sky to see by the stars what o’clock it was. It appeared to be about three. By daybreak perhaps he would be at Favara.

Having passed through the tunnel and come within sight of Girgenti station, at the point where the road turns off to the big village among the sulphur pits, he was obliged to halt, to wait for the passing of two companies of soldiers who, silent, breathless, at a forced pace, were making a night march in that direction. From the railwayman on duty he learned that, notwithstanding the proclamation of the state of siege, at Favara all the members of the disbanded Fascio, earlier in the evening, had arranged a meeting in the market

place and had attacked and set fire to the Municipio, the nobles' club, the toll houses, that the fires and rioting still continued, and that already several people had been killed and many injured.

"Indeed? Indeed?" Mauro muttered. "Still?"

And he tore himself from the arms of the railwayman, who was trying to hold him back, seeing him thus armed, to save him from the risk to which he was exposing himself of being arrested by the soldiers.

"I, by the soldiers of Italy?"

And he ran on to overtake them.

An impetuous, frantic joy restored his strength, which was beginning to flag; gave back their youthful vigour to his old legs that had marched with Garibaldi; his excitement turned to delirium; he actually felt at that moment that he was Sicily, the old Sicily that was uniting herself with the soldiers of Italy, in the common defence, against her new enemies.

His feet ate up the road, keeping a few paces in rear of the two companies, who at a certain point, at a word from certain messengers whom they encountered on their way, had broken into a run.

When, in the first glimmer of daylight, plastered with mud from head to foot, breathless, roused to a frenzy by the march, his brain fogged by exhaustion, he burst into the village with the soldiers, he had no time to see anything, to think

of anything; hurled, amid a dense volley of stones, into a furious street fight, he received a medley of impressions so rapid and violent, that he could take in nothing, except the terrified flight of a compact mass of people, who ran away screaming; a tremendous roar; a stunning blow and . . .

The market place, as though it too were shattered and put to flight in the wake of the screaming populace who were deserting it, as soon as the smoke from their rifles melted in the livid glimmer of the dawn, seemed to the eyes of the soldiers to be held down by the weight of five lifeless bodies, scattered here and there.

A strange, unconquerable impulse obliged the captain to give an order at once, of any sort, to his men. Those five bodies that lay there, sprawling awkwardly on their faces, in a horrible immobility, in the mud of the market place, furrowed by the flight of the mob, formed a spectacle unendurably grim. And a serjeant and corporal, at their captain's order, advanced with hesitating steps across the market place until they came to the first of these bodies.

The serjeant bent down and saw that the body, which had fallen with its face on the ground, was armed like a brigand. He took the gun from its shoulder, and displayed it at arm's length to the captain; then handed the gun to the corporal, and bent down again over the body to take from its belt first one then a second pistol, which likewise

he shewed to his captain. Upon which the captain, stirred by curiosity, although he still felt one of his legs trembling violently and was afraid that the soldiers might notice this weakness, went up to the corpse himself, and ordered them to turn it over so that he might see its face. When moved, the corpse revealed on its bloodstained breast four medals.

The three soldiers stood gazing at one another, stupefied and awed.

Who was this that they had killed?

THE END

APPENDIX

I am indebted to Professor Cesare Foligno, of Oxford, and to Professor Walter Starkie, of Trinity College, Dublin, the author of an important critical study of Pirandello, for the following corrections and amplifications of the Bibliography appended to *Shoot!*

B. NOVELS (*ROMANZI*)

3. IL FU MATTIA PASCAL

This novel was first published in 1904, in Rome, by the Nuova Antologia.

C. SHORT STORIES (*NOVELLE*)

7. LA VITA NUDA

Published 1910.

8. TERZETTI

Published 1912.

9a. TU RIDI

Published 1920.

10. LA TRAPPOLA

Published 1913.

12. E DOMANI, LUNEDÌ . . .

Published 1916.

D. CRITICISM

1. LAUTE UND LAUTENTWICKELUNG / der / Mundart von Girgenti. / Inaugural-Dissertation /

zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde / bei der / philosophischen Fakultät / der / Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn / eingereicht und mit den beigefügten Thesen verteidigt / am 21 März 1891, Mittags 12 Uhr / von / Luigi Pirandello / aus Girgenti. / Opponenten: / Jean Etienne Lork, Dr.phil. / Franz Pütz, cand.phil. / Halle a.S. / Druck der Buchdruckerei des Waisenhauses / 1891.

Pp. iv + 52.

Dedication: Herrn Prof. Dr. Wendelin Foerster in dankbarer Verehrung gewidmet.

The thesis is written in German, but concludes with the following autobiographical note in Latin:

Natus sum Aloysius Pirandello Agrigenti anno huius saeculi sexagesimo septimo e patre Stephano ICto, matre Catherina. Fidem profiteor catholicam. Litterarum primordiis imbutus, Panormitanum gymnasium per octo annos frequentavi. Maturitatis testimonio praeditus, Panormitanam litterarum universitatem petii anno h.s. octogesimo sexto, ut philologicis studiis operam nauarem, ubi scholis interfui Cortesi, Fraccaroli, Pennesi, Mestica, Pais. Anno transacto me contuli Romam, ubi audiui prodocentes Nannarelli, Monaci, Occioni, Guidi, Belloch, Dalla Vedova, Labriola, Piccolomini, Cugnoni, † Lignana, Bonghi, De Ruggiero. Duobus annis post me contuli Bonnam, ubi per ter sex menses me docuerunt Buechler et Foerster. Insigni Foersteri comitate factus est, ut in seminarium eius philologicum reciperer, cuius per duo semestria fui sodalis ordinarius.

2. ARTE E SCIENZA

Luigi Pirandello / Arte e Scienza / Saggi / Roma /
W.Modes, Libraio Editore / Corso Umberto I.,
146 / 1908.

Contents: 1. Arte e Scienza.

2. Un Critico Fantastico.

3. Illustratori, Attori e Traduttori.

4. Per uno studio sul verso di Dante.

5. Poscritta.

6. Soggettivismo e oggettivismo nell'arte
narrativa.

7. Per l'ordinanza d'un sindaco.

8. I sonetti di Cecco Angiolieri.

3. L'UMORISMO

First published in 1908 (Lanciano, Carabba).

E. DRAMA

Professor Starkie, in a skeleton bibliography attached
to his *Luigi Pirandello* (J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.,
1926) gives the following dates of production of
certain of the plays:

3. PENSACI, GIACOMINO!	1916
4. IL BERRETTO A SONAGLI	1917
5. COSI' E' (SE VI PARE)	1916
9. L'INNESTO	1917
10. TUTTO PER BENE	1920
11. COME PRIMA MEGLIO DI PRIMA	1920
12. SEI PERSONAGGI IN CERCA D'AUTORE	1921
13. ENRICO IV	1922

15. LA SIGNORA MORLI UNA E DUE (original version)	1920
F. 1. ALL'USCITA	1924
2. LUMIÈ DI SICILIA	1913

The following volumes have been published by Messrs. Bemporad since the compilation of the Bibliography attached to *Shoot!*

B. NOVELS (*ROMANZI*)

1. L'ESCLUSA

Luigi Pirandello / L'esclusa / romanzo / Nuova ristampa riveduta e corretta / firenze / R. Bemporad e f^o

1927—Prato, Tip. Giachetti, F^o e C. Propr. R. Bemporad & F.^o

Pp. iv + 244. Price L.13. This edition appears in a white wrapper of imitation parchment, uniform with *Uno nessuno e centomila*. The dedication is omitted, but at the end of the text, above the word *Fine*, is the date: "Monte Cave, 1893."

3. IL FU MATTIA PASCAL

Luigi Pirandello / Il fu / Mattia Pascal / Terza ristampa / firenze / R. Bemporad e f^o

Reprinted in 1927 in a wrapper uniform with those of *Uno, nessuno e centomila*, etc. Price L. 14.

6. QUADERNI DI SERAFINO GUBBIO OPERATORE

This also is now issued in a uniform wrapper with the other novels.

8. UNO, NESSUNO E CENTOMILA

Luigi Pirandello / Uno, nessuno e centomila / firenze
/ R. Bemporad e f^o / 1926.

1926—Prato, Tip. Giachetti, F^o e C.—Propr. R.
Bemporad & F^o.

Pp. iv + 232. Price L.10.

This volume is issued in a white wrapper of imitation parchment with the author's and publisher's names in black cursive script and the title of the book in red. The other volumes mentioned above are issued in uniform wrappers.

C. SHORT STORIES (*NOVELLE*)

The following stories are included in Volume XI of
Novelle per un anno:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 6. La paura del sonno | (XI. 4). |
| 15. Un'altra allodola | (XI. 7). |
| 20. Pallottoline! | (XI.14). |
| 70. La giara | (XI. 1). |
| 71. La morta e la viva | (XI. 6). |
| 72. La lega disciolta | (XI. 5). |
| 76. Non è una cosa seria | (XI.10). (See <i>Plays</i> E. 8). |
| 77. Pensaci, Giacomino! | (XI. 9). (See <i>Plays</i> E. 3). |
| 78. Richiamo all'obbligo | (XI. 8). (See <i>Plays</i> E.14). |
| 82. L'illustre estinto | (XI.12). |
| 83. Due letti a due | (XI.15). |
| 168. La cattura | (XI. 2). |
| <hr/> | |
| 204. Guardando una
stampa | (XI. 3). |
| 205. Tirocinio | (XI.11). |
| 206. Il Guardaroba dell'
eloquenza | (XI.13). |

Another story was published in the *Corriere della Sera* in April, 1926:

207. Pubertà.

NOVELLE PER UN ANNO

Volume XI. La giara.

Luigi Pirandello / Novelle / per un anno / Volume XI. / La giara / 1928 / R. Bemporad & F.—Editori —Firenze.

1927—Prato, Tip. Giachetti, F^o & C. Propr. R. Bemporad & F^o.

Published, November, 1927. Pp. vi-262 (including 2 pages of advertisements. Price L.12.

Contains: 70, 168, 204, 6, 72, 71, 15, 78, 77, 76, 205, 82, 206, 20, 83.

E. DRAMA

1. (Vol. XVIII).

La ragione degli altri / commedia in tre atti / nuova edizione riveduta e corretta, etc., etc. (Printed 1925).

Pp. 164 (including two pages of advertisements) price L.11 (in Florence L.10).

8. (Vol. XVI)

Ma non è / una cosa seria / commedia in tre atti / nuova edizione riveduta e corretta / (mask) / R. Bemporad, etc., etc. (Printed 1925.)

Pp. 182. Price L.11 (in Florence L.10).

9. (Vol. XVII)

L'innesto / commedia in tre atti / nuova edizione riveduta e corretta / etc., etc. (Printed 1925.)

Pp. 122—two blank pages at end. Price L.11 (in Florence L.10).

22. (Vol. XXI)

DIANA E LA TUDA / tragedia in tre atti / 1927.
Firenze Stabilimento Pisa e Lampronti.

Pp. 168. Price L.11 (in Florence L.10). Second edition 1927.

Dedication: a Marta Abba.

(This play was produced at Zurich, in German, in November, 1926, and in Italian at the Teatro Eden, Milan, in January, 1927.)

21. (Vol. XXII).

L'amica / delle mogli / commedia in tre atti (mask)
/ R. Bemporad & F^o—Editori—Firenze.

71-1927 Tip. Scolastica condotta da F. Ciuffi, Via
Tripoli 28, Firenze

Pp. 164 (including three pages of advertisements).
Price L.11 (in Florence L.10).

Dedication: a Marta Abba.

This volume appears in a special wrapper designed by Dino Tofani. The title is in a panel upon a background of masks with floral decoration in indigo and buff. The play was produced in the spring of 1927.

F. PLAYS IN ONE ACT

(Vol. XIX)

Maschere nude / Teatro di Luigi Pirandello / Lumie
di Sicilia / Ceeè / La patente / commedie in un
atto / (mask) / etc., etc.

Printed in 1926. Pp. 176 (including one page of advertisements). Price L.11 (in Florence L.10).

7. *L'imbecille*: pages 5-46.

2. *Lumière di Sicilia*: pages 47-92.

8. *Cecè*: pages 93-144.

3. *La patente*: pages 145-174.

(Vol. XX)

Maschere nude / Teatro di Luigi Pirandello / All'uscita / mistero profano / Il dovere del medico / un atto / La morsa / epilogo in un atto / L'uomo / dal fiore in bocca / dialogo / (mask) / etc., etc.

Printed in 1926. Pp. 132. Price L.11 (in Florence L.10).

1. *All'uscita*: pages 5-26.

9. *Il dovere del medico*: pages 27-64.

This play was produced by the Teatro Arcimboldi in January, 1926.

10. *La morsa*: pages 65-110.

11. *L'uomo dal fiore in bocca*: pages 111-130.

12. A new play in one act, *Bellavita*, was produced in the spring of 1927.

The *Almanacco Italiano* for 1928 gives the dates of the most recent productions as follows:

Il dovere del medico, produced by Vitti at the Teatro Arcimboldi, Milan, Jan. 27, 1926.

L'imbecille, produced at the Teatro Meravigli, Milan, Oct. 30, 1926.

Diana e la Tuda, produced (in German) at the Schauspielhaus, Zurich, Nov. 20, 1926. It was next produced (in Catalan) at Barcelona, and finally by

Pirandello himself at the Teatro Eden, Milan, on Jan. 14, 1927.

L'amica delle mogli, produced by Pirandello at the Teatro Argentina, Rome, April 27, 1927.

Bellavita, produced by the Almirante-Rissone-Tofano Company at the Teatro Eden, Milan, May 27, 1927.

SCAMANDRO, a fantasy in five episodes by Luigi Pirandello, with a musical and choral accompaniment by Ferdinando Liuzzi, was produced at Florence on February 17, 1928 at the first meeting of the revived Accademia dei Fidenti.

LA NUOVA COLONIA, a myth, was produced by Pirandello at the Teatro Argentina, Rome, in March, 1928.

C. K. S. M.

Rome, April, 1928.

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